

The Dissertation Committee for Richard Neill Hadder certifies that this is the
approved version of the following dissertation:

Apparitions of Difference:
Essays on the Vocation of Reflexive Anthropology

Committee:

Kathleen Stewart, Supervisor

Richard Flores

Ward Keeler

Elizabeth Keating

James Wilce

**Apparitions of Difference:
Essays on the Vocation of Reflexive Anthropology**

by

Richard Neill Hadder, B.A., M.A.I.S., M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy.

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2007

Preface

Dear Reader(s),

Hi, how are you? It has been suggested to me that a few pages of prefatory remarks of the form “dear reader” would help “prepare the reader to be disoriented” in the essays I’ve written. I’m very happy to do so, insofar as corresponding with you in this way somewhat lessens the natural readerly tendency to demand—intentionally or not—that I correspond “to” you. This distinction might be the most important cord running through the essays, which all in some way discuss coping strategies for how to deal with irrevocable, incommunicable difference. The maps by which we tend to conceptualize “diverse” people in familiar or categorical terms are inadequate. Disorienting? Yes, insofar as the reader holds to a protocol that does want some of its categories to remain unquestionable. Common sense tells us that one has to stand on solid ground to swing a hammer effectively; whereas my project has turned out to have more in common with Derrida’s, in that one can’t write about what underwrites meaning without either violating one’s own thesis or else finding some other technique for swinging the hammer—or wielding the scalpel, or unwinding the threads of a fabrication, or any metaphor you choose, so long as it means fundamental anti-foundationalist critique.

I’m not interested in linguistic foundations as a philosophical matter, however. Deconstruction of meaning goes hand in hand with my rather urgent need to break apart the naturalized idea of experience. No matter how astutely we observe the cultural construction of experience from a critical distance, there remains an uncritical fall-back operational presumption that a report on one’s embodied experience (as an ethnographer, for instance) is concrete; as if there were a simple sentence (see how we’re back to language again) that could accurately communicate basic shared elements of sense data, as if there weren’t learned and arbitrary

forces behind what one is primed to notice, to ignore, to recall, to interpret, to infer as causality—and as if what one sees can be assumed to be all there is, merely because one doesn't see anything else. Awareness of the learned and arbitrary character of experience has, during the past thirty years, attached more readily to the Balinese than to the anthropologist. I've needed to understand and circumvent this level of presupposition. The differences between my experience and yours—differences which shared practices of common language gloss over—matter more than is generally supposed. Neither are the products of these fallen-through differences small matters: their products are things like trauma, disability, and the tipping point between an argument and a fight. My target is the cultural force of presupposition, then, which is a classically anthropological subject matter I approach through an emergent set of techniques and widely divergent literatures. My aim has not been to "disorient the reader," and in fact I think such a reaction marks a certain kind of resistance to the ways my text explicitly asks to be read—namely, my assertion that all texts, including anthropological ones, and particularly this one, ought to be approached anthropologically. Every text is a cultural document, even if it disguises itself as a report. Orientation itself, then, is very much the topic to keep in mind. Its outlines re-appear in various guises again and again.

It occurs to me, too, that what some readers find disorienting may be the fact that my text is not primarily organized according to the principle of linear development. It is organized according to the principle of repetition, which is native to human socialization. I was able to recognize somewhere along the way that this was going on in my writing, and I was able to recognize the usefulness of refining it as an intentional technique. What linguists call "parallelism" is basic to the voice and consciousness constructed here. Similarly, I don't believe the present work can be read properly if read once and/or from a single perspective. I say this not as a conceit, but simply because of the way books are written and how my own work has inevitably reflected on and multiplied that process. For one thing, I began and completed all the essays at roughly the same time and wrote them

concurrently during 2006. Most passages migrated very freely from one chapter to another before the thing took shape from the connections these passages left behind as the residue of their being sewn into new contexts and then ripped out again to be tried someplace else. Gradually, I found myself learning to use a peculiar lexicon and set of images, such that the reader now has to be socialized to their meaning rather than being taught them formally. This wasn't on purpose, but it does faithfully produce the document of an in-vivo thought process, thus providing the texture I am asking you to work through. Second, bear in mind that the few minutes required to read from one paragraph to the next very often maps onto a year of intensive writerly work, including my digesting hundreds of texts in the meantime. This holds true from front to back. Thus, it was written from multiple perspectives and in multiple layers. It's a text that wants to be lived with for a while and/or understood within a conversation among several readers. This multiplicity is itself the technique for encountering individual differences, those unshared qualia that culture fails to present. They aren't presentable without a mechanism for bringing out contrasts within seemingly unified entities like mono-graphs or narratives about an individual's field experiences. By these means, one's own presuppositions can be foregrounded and one is prompted to formulate the idea that one has an orientation, and isn't at the origin of a simple vector between sense and sense data. "Dialogue" is of course the well-rehearsed but still-elusive philosophical term for this dynamic.

Another binding agent within the collection became evident to me only after letting the whole manuscript sit for a while, during which time passages and images revisited me. "The theory" that gradually constructs itself here deals with the anthropological study of the present, perhaps as opposed to the cultural Other; as such, it keeps company with Brian Massumi (1995) and recent work by Kathleen Stewart (2005, in press), neither of which I quite appreciated until I had derived my own approach based on many of the same texts they cite. Here is my version. Individual difference exists solely in the present. Once it is recognized and schematized as an experience of

something or of some kind, the particularity of the present has been abducted into practical categories steeped in past and absent contexts. Husserl concluded at the outset of the last century that what we experience as the present is already past—a re-cognition—while vision science made similar observations at the beginning of this century, as I note in Chapter 2. Put another way, individual difference always constitutes the present, which cannot be conventionally experienced (I suspect that affect, which we tend to think of as a phenomenon floating somewhere near emotion, is instead our unqualified registration of the present). I'm not especially concerned here with that aspect of the present concerned with time, however. The other constituent of the present is, quite simply, the fact that one is in it; it isn't happening any place else. Reflexivity is the avenue for sensing this field, insofar as direct observation instead apprehends a field that is confined to the space in front of the observer. The way to encounter the present, and especially presences, is through a reflexive interrogation of one's own presupposing knowledges and values that leaves one less certain of what one knows. Things become contingent and questionable. I will refer to this practice as ethics. Reflexivity, the present, and individual difference have therefore turned out to comprise a system. The result is a critical theory of how radical difference enters into or becomes dissociated from awareness.

All these entirely too meta-reflexive comments about a text—itsself a text that tries to account fundamentally for its own production and the textual production of authorial consciousness—are only made necessary by the fact that readers are apparently likely to encounter this work as something at once more internally connected than a simple stack of seven essays but less obviously cohesive than an ethnography. You are free to read any assortment of the essays in any order without reference to any of what I have mentioned; every essay has a topic sentence and sports a more or less conventional structure. I summarize the essays as separate texts in the next section (I recommend chapters 3, 5, and 6). If you feel prompted to understand the collection as a single work, on the other hand, then I recommend that you encounter it as the artifact of a thought process being

carried out on the page, where it can be studied. More or less every page records a process of heuristic thinking, one bent on transcending socialized categories in search of new ideas about how experience and selfhood function and, just as importantly, how they break down. The text is always on its way someplace else. It is also talking about this process as it goes.

Because ethnographies provide legible records of very smart, creative people coping with difference, I treat ethnography as an intrinsically interesting body of literature with which I have tried to think about difference. My task ultimately required a historical remediation of three advents in post-1960s ethnographic practices: the repulsion of the study of mind by the study of interpretation, a flirtation with and rapid domestication of the self within the representation of the other, and the divorce between the critical study of texts and the empirical study of language. Reflexive anthropology, if that turns out to be a useful label, re-engineers anthropological study without these schisms. You might well object to these discussions of ethnographic practices, because they are keyed to an early moment of interpretive anthropology. First, my experience has been that a great many anthropologists still fall back on venerable understandings of ethnography, because senior ethnographers belong to that moment and their students have reached their majority. Interpretive dynamics are discussed less and less, however, and I am afraid that an important philosophical understanding will be lost to institutional memory in the next decade. I argue that there is unfinished business from the Interpretive Turn. Second, most ethnographies do not occupy the cutting edge, while the fact that many of the attempts to write in non-objectivizing ways will be labeled “experimental” highlights the fact that ethnography still has an ideological center based on realist interpretive science. So if I’m not writing about your work, I’m nevertheless reflecting on and learning from a body of work being produced today on the social science side of anthropology. More fundamentally, however, I argue that anything going by the name ethnography, experimental or realist, concerns itself with exploring collective life, either as process or product. I ask for a distinction to be made between,

on the one hand, techniques of writing and research that produce the ethnographer as an experiencing subject; versus the institutionalized impulse that these adventures ultimately serve. Much of what I do here, for example, partakes of the heuristic moment of ethnography, but I am not writing about a people, place, or practice. Finally, I argue that the objectifying tendencies we can so easily spot in 1960s ethnography are still with us, alive and well, within the fabric of anthropological discourse, just outside the focus of critical awareness. Hopefully, the essays tease out some examples of this. Ethnographic texts and people talking about “ethnography,” then, both provide surfaces on which I can track the dissociation of individual difference within the documentation of cultural difference.

An anthropology that remains programmatically reflexive as to its own construction of objective data will stress the much-prized—but also much romanticized and undertheorized—moment when the ethnographer is able to think “outside the box,” such as when a striking encounter overturns the research agenda brought by the anthropologist into the field. This moment takes place outside the context of research, either as a critical perspective on one’s ethnographic practices or as a mode of anthropological thinking beyond ethnography. In particular, we already know that our training informs our everyday lives and our dialogues with students, despite the absence of recording devices or opportunities for systematic data collection. The dissertation helps formalize our understanding of this heuristic and abductive process, which is at play both in the pedagogical encounter with students and the encounter with individual suffering (hopefully these remain separate for you). As a critical process for the production of self knowledge, moreover, reflexive anthropology is the way to find one’s voice without being given one by an observer or the society in which one lives.

Thanks for reading, and I’d be happy to hear your response if you write me at neill@txstate.edu.

RNH

April 29, 2007

THE ESSAYS

Chapter 1, "Presentiments," introduces basic theoretical concepts that occupy the other essays, starting with the understanding of my blindness as an ongoing manifestation of socially unincorporated difference. The pragmatics of individual difference and of text seem like two separate topics, but I attempt to articulate a vital relationship between them. Given that culture precludes and in fact dissociates the encounter with present particularity, owing to the tendency of interpretation to press the present context into the mold of past and absent ones, a critical distance is required to apprehend new and different qualities of the hermeneutic circle in which experience forms. It seems one has somehow to already be primed to expect the unknown. Writing permits this kind of reinterpretation, while an ethical attentiveness, discussed in Chapter 4, may be the closest thing attainable to real-time apprehension of presence. Sometimes phenomena needing to be understood are so complex that only writing can provide a reflexive surface adequate for attaining critical distance. Read as a completed product rather than as process, of course, the writing has a pre-fated quality: the events that the text has worked to formulate are present as presentiments in already-articulated forms. But we can approach the text from the position that the formulation of experience has been carried out through writing, and not as a completed, insular mental process preceding it. This is a pragmatic or rhetorical protocol of reading. The reading, writing, and circulation of texts, furthermore, continues to be an active, legible force of experience-making within social space. To interpret a text in isolation solely as a matter of its meaning, either as personal experience or as a cultural field of interpretive potentials, does not track what a text observably does pragmatically in the world. I use the example of Helen Keller's rhetorical style and her account of her introduction to language to describe textuality as an ongoing work of experience and to argue that individual

difference as what one must invariably discover through reading between the lines.

In Chapter 2, "A Crack in the Ground," I begin by rereading texts and fieldnotes from my prior short-term ethnographic projects. I had written ethnographic narratives that hinged on visual details I could not have experienced originally, and which implied a mobility in the field (collecting data) that I hadn't possessed. But a corrected form of ethnographic narrative proved beyond my reach, because my memories were already inherently visual and otherwise impossible. I tried for years to reread my memory as a palimpsest, but it wasn't one. There would be no experience of blindness or experience from a blind perspective unless I laboriously and theoretically constructed one. The institutional discourse of New Ethnography was complicit in addressing me with an injunction to present myself in the way of an immersed ethnographer, while my becoming trained to do so averted the possibility, much less the professional responsibility, to apprehend the radicality of my own situation and its methodological implications. At the same time, immersive ethnography's standardized negation of me provided the fulcrum by which I could begin to formulate a productive experience of blindness: ethnography and I became one another's dialectical Other. I present a critical reading of anthropology's "Interpretive Turn" by discussing reflexivity as it was developed in ethnography, ethnomethodology, and reflexive sociology, then argue for a composite approach. What I term "Self-analytics" is what psychoanalytics would have been if built upon the premise that "The reality of the inner psyche is the same reality as that of the sign" (Voloshinov 1973 [1930]: 26).

Chapter 3, "Making a Scene," examines the interpretive work disclosed in everyday scenes of my blindness. I focus on various forms of logistical and intercorporeal awareness (or lack thereof) that blind and sighted people display within public encounters. The chapter takes the concept of disability out of the category of physical impairment and places it onto the field of social relations. The "scenes" of my disability help complete the discussion of reflexivity begun in the previous chapter by providing occasions to discuss

intersubjective attunement (Rommetveit 1998, Wilce 2004) and communicative competence. I define disability as the negative of agency and describe this product in terms of a triadic system of differences: it is a function of the magnitude of difference between oneself and the actor anticipated by the social field (including the built environment), as compounded by emergent conditions created during the interaction, and mitigated by prosthetic mechanisms (technologies, humans, animals, routines, and reliable environments). Disability, in turn, is defined by the formula "individual difference is disabling."

Chapter 4, "The Interpretation of Difference," polemicalizes the production and circulation of anthropological knowledge, identifying classroom pedagogy as a major site of anthropology's real-world circulation. This essay joins what the dissertation learns about blindness as a social process to how anthropology students are asked to become aware of their social contexts, largely outside the practice of organized research. The central figure of this essay is the dialectical relationship between empirical research, as an ocular production of new knowledge; and anthropological heuristics, the self-critical inquiry into the conditions of knowledge production that I practice in these essays. The discussion is framed by the three basic philosophical components of what I am identifying as cultural critique: the pre- and post-Hegelian dialectical form of interpretation, with special attention to Ricoeur and Gadamer; the ethical remediation of one's own ethos, defined as a value horizon; and, finally, the pedagogical discipline—ultimately always a self-discipline—that compels ethical engagement. I argue that postmodern theorists have often reproduced models of philosophical ethics uncritically, neglecting the fact that philosophical texts are addressed to a professional public already disciplinarily bound to pursue self-knowledge. Postmodern social theorists adopt the same form of address without addressing the framework of their actual publics who, as students and social scientists, tend to "apply" poststructural concepts within a narrow field. There is no disciplinary compulsion for social scientists to rethink personal and professional practices outside that specialized field. As a result,

the claims fieldwork tends to recognize as “interesting” are organized within the institution of professional anthropology, while the coveted scene in which the fieldworker’s itinerary is overturned by a different claim on her attention coming from an agent in the field is mystified. Pedagogy urges programmatic attention to the present communicative interaction, such as the classroom, so that anthropological knowledge can be produced within the dialogue in which it is exchanged. Significantly, only processes of repetition and synthesis with one’s own situation can teach the body how to practice an ethics learned in the sequestered context of reading “about” culture and society. I do not attack the idea of field research, but emphasize that ethics warrants equal critical understanding as part of anthropological practice.

Chapter 5, “Self Knowledge, from Circulation to Production,” contrasts the deconstructive uses of blindness from Chapter 3 with analysis of “constructive” examples of similarly-structured scenes in disability performance and practices of disabled identity formation within discourse. Michael Warner’s discussion of publics and counterpublics (Warner 2002) provides a framework for examining these processes in terms of who is being addressed and what public is being constituted by the discourse. This issue is complex in the setting of published autobiographical accounts which, in important respects, are addressed to the author as a reflexive project to produce self knowledge. By focusing on the pragmatics of particular observable speech events, the essay problematizes the reliance cultural studies places on the projection of an ideal reader or the reader normal to a defined culture group. For autobiographical performances, including memoir, pragmatics analyzes the text in terms of what it does—the conceptual relationships the text constructs—rather than what it means as a representation of an extra-textual reality (the works of Faulkner and Joyce, for example, demand a discourse-pragmatics protocol of reading). I conclude with an examination of several strategies of analytical reflexivity found in the AIDS diary of anthropologist Eric Michaels, who textually reformulates his changing relationship to his body, sexuality, professional identity, friends, family, and social institutions.

Chapter 6, "Clinical Inferences," examines three widely divergent points on the map of what, for the sake of argument, we can call cognitive science. Cognitive anthropology, neuroimaging, and psychosurgery all operate according to a foundational claim to make grounded inferences about the mind. Working from three specific texts, I identify the conceptual hinges that the scientists have taken as given, then I imagine contrary possibilities. The result is not a scientific critique, but a rhetorical one. For absolutely all practical purposes, the foundations of empirical science reside within history and culture. Scientific practice crosses into the realm of a regime at the point where its foundationalisms are taken as an objective reality withdrawn from any contact with falsification procedures. Without a reflexive function (i.e., a self-analytics or cultural critique), reality is trapped in a circuit comprising the scientist, the subject, and an array of instruments calibrated to keep this circuit humming. Anything qualitatively at odds with established reality will remain dissociated by virtue of its ready interpretability according to quantitative instruments.

Chapter 7, "Argonauts of the Western Tradition," takes discourse pragmatics very far afield in order to rekindle critical dialogue between the empirical study of communicative practice and poststructural philosophy, both of which historically stem from the same critiques of structure. The essay performatively revisits the fundamental theoretical orientation of the other essays: a reflexively-involved form of cultural critique that comprehends difference through attending to the pragmatics of the social field as a communicative interaction. "What is going on" is understood by suspending the "aboutness" of discourse, apprehended as the expression of a system, to be understood instead according to the local production of agency and the wider circulation of value indexed in local exchanges.

Page by page, then, the essays deal with the philosophy of science and the sociology of ethnographic knowledge as much as fields of action. Each essay addresses itself to a somewhat different but related disciplinary literature, ranging from linguistic anthropology to cognitive science, the sum of which make up the scope of the problematic as I have encountered it. The

overall organization into an essay collection has resulted from these topics and discourses gradually differentiating themselves as I wrote. I have had to struggle against the pull of scholarly writing conventions that present “objects of study” as special topics contained by the disciplined scholarly work as representation. When disability appears within such a discourse, as I will argue, it is immediately severed from the contextual processes that produce it. Accordingly, the idea of a collection also contributed the solution to a problem: how to impede the readerly tendency to build up a final, unified vision of the subject so as to instead promote a coming to terms with the irreducible differences among the essays (and sites of disablement), along with a sense of the generative process that nevertheless crops up repeatedly from one essay to the next. That’s the protocol for remediating the socially averted encounter with difference.

Apparitions of Difference: Essays on the Vocation of Reflexive Anthropology.

Publication No. _____

Richard Neill Hadder, Ph.D.

Supervisor: Kathleen Stewart

When the author sets out to use anthropology to understand his physical blindness, he discovers a dialectical tension between empirical observation versus heuristics that is held in common by both ethnography and disability. Ensuing discussions synthesize personal experience with the history of anthropology and the philosophy of science in order to construct a critical dialogue in which blindness can be understood anthropologically, while the individuality of the experience of blindness ultimately pushes ethnography past its generic limits. The essays argue that the study of cultural differences cannot apprehend disability processually. Disability is instead properly understood as an unshared individual difference dissociated from communicative practice and learned practices of embodiment, dissociated as well by ethnographic accounts of collective practices. Individual difference is disabling; meanwhile, ideologically, the visible products of disability are driven into the individual body, qualifying it as disabled, without reference to the generative process. This exploration becomes an application of "reflexive anthropology," which departs qualitatively from the conventional project of ethnography by centering critical attention on the interlocutory field that includes the anthropologist as a fully invested participant. It remediates the situated cultural production of one's own knowledge and experience, which opens the possibility to become attentive to the individual differences that constitute the present. The essays historicize three advents in interpretive anthropology: the repulsion of the study of mind by the study of interpretation, the flirtation with and rapid domestication of the self within the representation of the other, and the

divorce between the critical study of texts versus the empirical study of language. The approach incorporates discourse pragmatics and practice theory, but also post-objectivist sensibilities. However, the discourse of affirmation associated with poststructuralism is here replaced with one stemming from suffering and disability. Collectively, the essays argue that the ethical practice of “thinking anthropologically” outside ethnography, by students and anthropologists as students, warrants programmatic attention.

Contents

Chapter 1. Presentiments	1
From Ethnography to Reflexive Anthropology	3
The Pragmatics of Individual Difference	12
Paper Doubt (Reading Texts as Culture)	19
The Semantic Mitigation of Experience in Helen Keller's <i>The Story of My Life</i>	25
Chapter 2. A Crack in the Ground	36
Firth and I.....	38
Self-Analytics: Reflexivity and Reflexive Traditions	62
Chapter 3. Making A Scene	86
Fieldnotes for a Micro-Sociology of the Public Gaze	88
Scene I, concerning the performativity of blindness.....	90
Scene ii, in which "a rule of avoiding anomalous things affirms and strengthens the definitions to which they do not conform."	92
Scene iii, what paying attention looks like	94
Scene iv, on unreasoned solicitude.	95
Scene v: schemas habituated in one context are not readily available in another.....	98
Scene vi, in which my behaviors are misread several times in quick succession.....	100
Scene vii, in which I recover context awareness despite my tacit adaptive strategies.....	106
Scene viii, on the ethics and benefits of being reflexive.....	107
Scene ix, A walk in the city.....	109
Scene x, inscription.	114
Self-Analytics: Playing Out of Tune	115
Chapter 4. The Interpretation of Difference	134
Anthropology's Heuristic Moment	139
Escaping the Disability Category	148

Power and Inference	152
(Pedagogy) For an Anthropology Without Fields	162
Coda	175
Chapter 5. Self Knowledge, from Circulation to Production	179
Can Individual Difference Address a Public, or address itself at all?	183
Wild Reflexivity: The AIDS diary of anthropologist eric Michaels	197
Categorical Synthesis	199
Mimesis	203
Abduction.....	206
Second Stories.....	207
Conclusion	213
Chapter 6. Clinical Inferences: Some Reading Notes on	
Cognitive Science	217
From Eye to Mind.....	219
Reading the Neuroimage.....	231
Howard Dully’s Lobotomy.....	244
Chapter 7. Argonauts of the Western Tradition	249
Out-of-the-Ordinary Language Philosophy	256
One Last Disavowed Category, or, “Up he went and down he came without his eyes”	264
References.....	272
Vita.....	284

Chapter 1. Presentiments

They say, the alien frog is saying “Hi, how are you?” Words bubble up in a cartoon balloon above eyestalks wagging in a friendly way. No wonder, really, that antenna with eyes seem always to be the archetypal way to make something into an alien: likely, it’s a sort of hyper-rational human wish fulfillment. The eyes are just a symbol for the functioning of super-sensitive antennae, which can’t in itself be pictured. I happen to remember the mural today, and so I see it as I pass it by, painted on the wall of what once was a record store. The artist is middle-aged now, living with his parents and drawing pictures or writing songs at a little desk in their garage—all the independent living he can manage. Few people look into who he was anymore or where he ended up, but so far enough have come out of the woodwork to save the mural. My shoulder connects hard with the shaft of a light pole planted in the middle of the sidewalk, and I am brought up short. I’ve walked this route a thousand times without incident, so my body is apparently less reliable than the environment. But that revelation, which ultimately has existential repercussions, isn’t my first reaction.

“Who put that there?” The simplest question, but one that only occurs to me now. The sidewalk is narrow, and the pole is more than a foot in from the street. There is nothing necessary or inevitable about its design or placement. Ordinarily, what anthropologists call the “built environment” isn’t something I understand as built at all. It was already there, part of the scenery, when I arrived. Once the question of the builders slips in, though, the environment begins to shift uncomfortably. I want to portray a sudden and momentary occupation of this space now strictly in terms of a sort of schizophrenia (but not the postmodern fun kind), while for the moment bracketing any question of what causes it.

I am standing at a busy street corner hemmed in by enormous concrete buildings that reflect a palpable heat from the mid-summer sun.

They don't announce their identities or address themselves to me in any way—they just loom over me, anonymous megalithic blocks. If I take one step toward the ones across the street in either direction, I'll go down under the weight of hurdling metal machines. If there is a mind inside one of them, I will have to infer its existence by way of a subjunctivization of my own mind into the strange opaque carapace. Is there a logic to it? My body is tensed with flight response while I force myself to wait for some sense of a pattern. To my left, the side of the building is a hundred unbroken yards of glass, but a spear of sunlight flashes before a man, standing on the sidewalk, framed for an instant before he disappears. So there are doors, and there must be some sort of intelligible markings, unless they count their steps the way I do. Behind me stands a homeless man, painting a sign for himself: "STRESSED? YELL AT A HOMELESS MAN \$1" (on second thought, he isn't any longer so homeless). I am standing in a place not meant for me, trapped in a blinding heat. There was little thought of me in its design, no acknowledgment of me from the builders, even though I was born here and I have been present throughout their lives. I was here before this street or these buildings. I want to simply convey this sense of not-belonging to the built environment. Who put that pole there? I check my wallet, but only find a five, one green eye atop a pyramid blinking back at me. Everything I will do to navigate this field will be analytical, tense, and a matter of dodging, slipping through, adapting my body to alien works. I have become suspicious of everyone, everything, and especially of myself.

Once, two Rwandan boys were deposited in a Michigan apartment along with a box of cereal, something they'd never seen before. They still sat hungry the next morning, waiting for the aid workers to come back, looking at the smiling White family at table and having no idea that what they heard when they shook the box was the food inside ("Open Here>"). They were thirsty, too, since unlike stranded science-fiction heroes, they hadn't discovered the function of the gleaming taps. How many of these forgotten codes do we live by? If this is culture, then most of culture has

forgotten its meaning. Ideas of tradition, meaning, and practice all exhibit an obverse side well-suited for explaining how people get things done together or in conflict. What brings me up short is the sense that culture is also an oppressive force—oppressive not like a regime but like humid Southern heat in September. It keeps us as architects, aid workers, and even anthropologists from imagining the outside, and only on the outside do we feel it. On this corner, I am standing below the ground.

FROM ETHNOGRAPHY TO REFLEXIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

I may as well set the tone with a confession: I have resisted ethnography. It started during the late 1990s, in the middle of doctoral coursework, when I was finally able to name a frustrated sense that both the discovery of how collective life “works” and the suffering of marginalized groups were somehow epiphenomenal to another nagging concern. No matter how small and oppressed the group, individuals claimed by it could still share one another’s practices and know or be told they had a valued identity, as documented by the resistance practices ethnographers almost invariably discovered. Where did the first atom of resistance—the first spoken word, the first realization of value—come from? I found myself reading in vein for signs of the failures of individual lives, for what wasn’t working, for how to learn from disorders or disorderliness, for inarticulate differences that would mark the moment antecedent to communicable practice. The ethnographer as a so-called professional stranger (Agar 1980) proved more interesting in this regard than the represented natives, but the ethnographer’s situatedness in the home ground from which she came and to which she returned, as well as her knack of settling into the field, made it clear that the ethnographic concern for observed differences wasn’t a genre readily directed toward the degenerative force of being-different, of being located beyond the horizon of evaluation. My task became the apprehension of that force and the description of its cultural ecology. This undertaking

would remain inextricable from ethnography but would put me at odds with most of its conventions.

During those same years of doctoral course work, my visual acuity declined rapidly, from the ability to read large text to what clinicians call “contrast perception.” The question “how much can you see?” had always been part of a logistical problematic accompanying me throughout life, and responses that incorporated categorizations like “visually impaired,” “legally blind,” and “partially sighted” all boiled down effectively to “structurally ambiguous” (Douglas 2002 [1966]). I could answer them by reciting my visual acuity, as if that were ever a meaningful number; or with a practical and always-contextual explanation of how my vision was a function of light, familiarity, a 3-degree field of vision, stress, rods versus cones, etc. “How much”—they always wanted quantity, not qualities of sight. Funny, too, how a description of what I saw always relied on using my own indirect access to normal vision as a referent—“I can see the distant tree but not the closer one” or “the tree is a blur”—which already overturned the communication of partial sight. To settle under the “blind” label was a relief from the standpoint of my becoming socially predictable to others and functionally reliable to myself. Others I know who have made this transition concur.

Even so, blindness as a social category can’t be assumed to operate as an identity formed around culturally-reproducing practices or as a site of collective subjugation, although either of these assumptions can, in various ways, serve the cause of accommodative macro-level change in public policy. Most everyday disabling moments—when I tend most to think of myself as blind—happen with familiars who I’ve “trained” or else with people who appear never to have imagined blindness before, much less learned to discriminate invidiously against it. That a lack of sight can always serve as the obvious anchor for identifying the blind as a sociological group obscures the fact that blindness never accrues meaning except in particular disabling interactions constituted by the wider society, while even this acknowledgement hasn’t yet begun to account for why the unreflexive

normativity of practice will make the accommodation to blindness in the emergent flow of interaction orders of magnitude more complex than a mere surface-order structural or political acknowledgment of it, such as putting Braille on elevator panels or passing a law to grant my guide dog status as a member of the public. These measures don't fix it, because the troublesome dynamics of structural ambiguity noted above are still at work in the overwhelmingly emergent aspects of public and private life.

Blindness forever rejuvenates its quality of being, in effect, a first-contact situation. The scene is new, the actors are new, or my own learned habits and assumptions about familiar artifacts are disruptive in the sense of bearing such a strongly ingrained ocular-centric enculturation that I momentarily forget the conditions I should know about my embodiment, such as the need to stay attuned to senses other than vision despite the fact that others don't. Meanwhile, my practical efforts to navigate public space—which in effect becomes privatized around me—take the form of an immediate and ongoing analytical preoccupation with micrological tactics and negotiations of bodies, spaces, actions, and interpretations, all of which effectively displace my attention from the general surroundings and to a degree actually determine more immediate interactions, simply as a consequence of moving through social space. What has grated most, then, is not blindness as a social category, but the way socially unincorporated difference encircles me in a sphere of rupture, disclosing so dramatically our typical lack of agility in accommodating disconcerting situations. The issue isn't blindness, but the structural failure to anticipate it, the lack of strategies for accommodating it (beyond the technologies and legislation that displace the interpersonal labor of accommodation), the sudden destabilizing reflexive awareness by the sighted of how deeply vision is ingrained in the way they communicate, the hazy awareness the blind might have of how much our habits are socialized within a sighted milieu, and the lack of self knowledge on everyone's part that would be required in order to change.

Emergent qualities of an interaction virtually guarantee that the possibility for accommodating radical yet socially unincorporated forms of difference will abut the limits of ordinary metacommunicative awareness. Information like “how much can you see?” or “what do you need from me, right now and whenever?” is no cure for the public or the blind.¹ And yet, the disabled and able-bodied alike are strongly predisposed to seek a final solution or, worse, avoid the occasion for any critical inquiry by pinning the entire social life of disability on a biomedical impairment. The supposed referent of the word “disability” is not the cause behind socially-ascribed disability categories or their attendant ideologies and behavioral symptoms. As I begin to suggest below, disability is an effect of a much more fundamental tendency of practice to enforce normative modes of embodiment while occluding actors’ awarenesses of the particular conditions under which their own knowledge and action are produced. As an instance of this process, moreover, social scientists have largely reduced disability to a collective category of diversity, missing its generativity, insofar as this marginalized topic has been pursued from within conventional outlines of ethnography.

Paul Rabinow (1977: 5) once borrowed a phrase from Ricoeur in order to describe ethnography as “the comprehension of self through the detour of the comprehension of the other.” Several points about the immediate context of his Ricoeur quotation make it a good place to crack open a history of interpretive science that I argue, to the consternation of some, remains with us today. The word “self” hides two very different contexts, in that

¹ This observation is made possible in large part by my position within a society that confers considerable legal and personal recognition upon the disabled through the Americans With Disabilities Act and other forms of institutional awareness. Outside this context, clear systemic discriminatory attitudes remain the most pressing concern. For example, a blind Fulbright researcher in the PRC describes being denied entrance to stores, restaurants, and taxi cabs solely on the basis of widespread assumptions that blindness poses too great a risk to business, presumably because of potential accidents (www.travelblog.org/bloggers/hong-kong-fulbrighter). See also Kohrman (2005) for a history of physical disability awareness in China. My interest is located in the gaps where, even in fairly disability-aware publics, any discourse or set of prescriptions shows itself to be inadequate in the absence of a reflexive understanding of the present communicative event.

Ricoeur's self and other are single individuals, but formally universal without reference to cultural differences; while Rabinow's are culturally relativistic but otherwise generic (the Moroccan Other versus the audience who can embody Rabinow's "I"). the self refracted by the so-called "detour" of the generalized other will consequently tend to learn about itself in rather generic terms, because the degree of reflexivity appropriate to ethnographic investigation is limited to those categories that react to the cultural model in some way—we might know if the ethnographer is not White, not male, or not heterosexual, for example. Likely, we could look behind the word "comprehension" as well to find two distinct usages, one being Ricoeur's idea of in situ philosophical dialogue, a pragmatic relationship with a particular object or being; versus empirical data analysis on route to sociological models, generalizeable knowledge with a component applicable across contexts. Accordingly, Rabinow offers his definition of interpretive fieldwork (for him, all ethnographic fieldwork) in a self-reflective account set off neatly from the grounded ethnographic research published before it. Not even the second book is autoethnography, however, but what he would later call "dia-ethnography" (Rabinow 1996: ix), aptly highlighting its dependence on the conventional project of cultural investigation. Post-1970s ethnography tends to take the form of the first-person exemplary or idiosyncratic tales found in Rabinow's *Reflections*, and certainly the appropriate use of ethnographic self-comprehension continues to hinge on its applicability to cultural models.² This should not be the only anthropological game in town, however.

² The communicable, transposable quality of the ethnographer's experience is encoded in the very common writing convention that uses "one" in place of "I" when introducing the arrival narrative. "One takes the road that leads west, leaving behind the stately buildings and palm-lined boulevards of Alexandria, passing rows of identical sand-colored buildings with balconies crowded with children, men in undershirts, women shouting across to neighbors, and clotheslines covered with multi-colored garments that dry instantly in the bright Egyptian sun (Abu-Lughod 1986: 1). "Traveling through the Malaysian rainforest, one first senses the presence of a Temiar settlement through a change in the density of jungle foliage: primary forest gives way in patches to secondary forest. These once-tended fields, now overgrown with brush and young trees, might indicate that one has only reached a former settlement site" (Roseman 1991: 1). "Even after passing through this fertile countryside, one is struck by the lushness of the city of Sefrou as it appears on the horizon. It is hidden from view as one approaches from Fez. The hills are now somewhat more substantial and the vistas less

Matters of individualistic action and process most often surface within social theory as the familiar “structure versus agency” clash of models. But this dichotomy is a false one, so long as agency is described as a property exhibited by a (still-structurally-designated) categorical population. The hermeneutics of cultural difference are not the same as the hermeneutics of individual perception, including for instance the interpretation of art (a favorite philosophical object of Ricoeur, Gadamer, Derrida, and ultimately Geertz). The hermeneutic circle is very much alive in both projects, but the pragmatics of the two differ. As a theoretical limitation, ethnography’s self-other circuit is able to critique the self only by virtue of the collective qualities already recognizable in the other by way of extant anthropological concepts or else those behaviors recognizably expressed by the other as a shared practice. In short, the loop carries considerable hermeneutic feedback. The particularity of both the spatial and temporal present—what makes a particular momentary scene stand out as “the present” against past and absent ones—must be articulated as the token of a discerned type of event, hence losing grasp of the particularity. Ultimately, this is a limitation of language itself. The ethnographic speech act in specific enacts a double displacement, one to duck out of the immediate context of dialogue, so that people become markers of demographic and political coordinates; and the other to slide from the interpersonal to the sociological scale as a reduction of the experienced flow of action to significant patterns of practice. Despite the fundamental ingredient of ethnography’s encounter with difference, the disciplining of ethnography makes it unsuited for comprehending the self where selfhood is (the) problematic.

There is another well-trodden disciplinary dichotomy: social versus personal or mental behavior. Does a turn away from cultural models shunt my project by default into the field of psychology? Immediately following the

sweeping and regular” (Rabinow 1977: 9). The quality here of a revelation of secreted knowledge belongs to a very individualistic discourse of transcendental experience, transposed in the arrival narrative to the plane of knowledge the ethnographer shares with the reader at the outset of an adventure.

Ricoeur borrowing, Rabinow writes of his mode of personal reflection that "It is vital to stress that this is not psychology of any sort." Anthropologists will recall that the interpretive turn, as the study of what is publicly available and consequential (and therefore communicable and communal) about the products of minds, prompted many authors to push against psychology, sometimes with conspicuous intensity, effectively ceding the entire phenomenon of mind to that narrowly empiricist discipline as its exclusive domain. Despite "psychological overtones," Rabinow insists, "The self being discussed is perfectly public, it is neither the purely cerebral cogito of the Cartesians, nor the deep psychological self of the Freudians" (pp. 5-6). Surely, there are other possible psychologies, but the most forceful academic trend since the 1960s, regrettably, has continued to center on a fight over whose reified objects are whose instead of a critical discussion of what knowledge various particular intellectual formations like psychology and anthropology actually produce and what the limitations of their instruments and ontologies are (e.g., it wasn't inevitable that we should assume that thoughts happen inside heads rather than in discourse). It is neither inevitable nor necessary to discard matters of individualistic experience as "psychological," as if this concept weren't a historical advent. A critical encounter with difference that problematizes the dynamics of how difference is both recognized and experienced belongs to anthropology as a field, thanks to anthropology's holistic sensibilities, but not to a discipline restricted to the study of culture or society or language in their practical modes; and much less to a psychological discipline steeped in cognitivism to the exclusion of discourse.³ Comprehension of individual difference entails both critique of

³ The emerging field of discourse psychology (Edwards and Potter 1992, Edwards 1997, Potter 1999) adopts much the same position as I express in these essays by similarly embracing elements of conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, practice theory, and psychoanalysis. Discourse psychology has thus far gained little traction in the U.S., and I suspect that the training and workplace contexts of anthropologists versus discursive psychologists will continue to support a distinction between these two amenable fields of study in a post-cognitivist Academy.

the present scene and reflexivity as self-critique—an interpretation of Ricoeur’s phrase slightly different from Rabinow’s.

Participant-observation may be the only professional practice that seeks to immerse people fully within the flow of everyday life while at the same time compelling them to remain conceptually unsettled. I was always riveted by the written records of this experience, because to be unsettled is to be disabled, *sui generis*. After all, the achievement of stable agentive conditions requires that artifacts already anticipate one’s body and reliable tactics be already adapted as agents take the field. As anyone who has had difficulty settling into a new situation knows, it is a struggle, and the struggle of accommodation itself in large part becomes the most immediate field of action. By the ethnography’s final chapter, however, I would inevitably be disappointed, because instead of a pedagogy of unsettledness, the typical ethnographer ultimately settles in, gains mastery (practical or at least analytical), and then chooses to move on, her story an account of having accounted for difference.⁴ To the extent one achieves such agency, one ceases to be disabled or encounter the affects of individual difference, so long as we bracket the idea of disability as a cultural identity. But to achieve such a position, an ethnographer who is still categorically disabled in the field must rely on additional stable forms of action, reliable environments, human assistance, and other prostheses—in effect, surrendering the nomadic practice that provides for the hyphenated perspective on social life. As I describe in Chapter 2, I began to have a nagging sense that I was losing knowledge every time I settled into fieldwork. I began by claiming to have resisted ethnography, but to put it the other way around would be equally true.

⁴ I am overgeneralizing, but in service to a fairly conventional boundary line between ethnography and other forms of cultural critique, such as mine. A study of not-closing-the-gap becomes heterography (Pandolpho 1997), a quasi-fictional intersubjective story (Ghosh 1992, Taussig 1997, Stewart 2005), or another kind of subjunctive staging executed as “an anthropological mode that can claim a status equal to that of knowledge and experience insofar as it allows us to conceive what knowledge and experience cannot penetrate” (Iser 1993: 299).

Ethnography has therefore played several important roles in my production of self knowledge, first as a practice through which I discovered that blindness wasn't what I'd taken it to be and, ultimately, as the legible surface on which the Western Tradition has charted its encounters with cultural difference. The dissertation constitutes a highly reflexive demonstration project in synthetic thinking that constantly returns to ethnography for inspiration. It is not an ethnography, however, because the double displacement proved fatal to a productive encounter with the field I carry with me (and perhaps there's some such field around each of us). I have instead documented a long-term process in which I have used the anthropological literature and the philosophies of language through which interpretive theorists found their voice to profoundly redefine the terms in which I encounter myself as an individual and my social surroundings.

As explored in Chapter 3, an anthropology of difference examines the social production of the possibility of agency, which implicates processes of self-constitution, thought, and experience encountered in particular scenes that are not thereupon reduced to a descriptive or predictive model. Their particularities are foregrounded by ruptures, failures, and misunderstandings that can't be corrected for once and all by way of specific knowledge in the form of prescriptions, inscriptions, injunctions, or institutions (societies have never really found a way to institutionalize critical thinking as habitus, policy, or law. Reason seems not to be encodeable in social institutions). The anthropological use of reflexivity does not set out to obtain authoritative knowledge of the self, but to take hold of one of the fundamental conditions that make up a present encounter—namely, that it is happening where you are, not somewhere else. The other fundamental condition of the present is its particularity, manifested in the knowledge that this moment is discernable from the past—in short, one's experience of time passing. I term this two-dimensional particularity "individual difference."

THE PRAGMATICS OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE

Anthropologists can already identify a solidly grounded ethnography of individual difference in terms of speech play: the individuated voice in discourse (B. Johnstone 2000), the agent discursively navigating multiple identities (Kroskrity 2001), and the performer's creativity in verbal art (Bauman 1986; Lavie, Narayan, and Rosaldo 1993). I am greatly indebted to these works, yet there remains something worrisome for my present purposes about the way the two distinct domains of theory and data, mutually constituted by investigatory methods, provide for the precision of research texts, as well as their verbal economy (no pun intended, but there it is). To start with, students of ethnography know well that quantifications like visual acuity or the poverty line beg the question of the practices from which these values derive their local import. When psychologists study individual differences in terms of the tension between an individual's metricalized value for a given variable in relation to values distributed across a normal curve, they are methodologically acknowledging that differences matter in the assessment of particular cases while nevertheless continuing to treat the variable (intelligence, personality traits, visual acuity, etc.) as a natural fact, often without reference to the institutional framework that has generated it. The quantum of the individual actor as an ethnographic or sociolinguistic observational unit seems to do something similar by depicting the individual as choosing among and utilizing what resources they possess or to which they possess access, or are authorized to use by virtue of something else they possess, and so on. The exercise of those resources and abilities become the data, which must at some level, deemed beyond the pale for that research, beg the question of how the individual develops creative talent or how the agency to survey and make choices is generated—all well and good, so long as communicative practice is the unit of analysis. If difference itself is the object, and not the individual agent in relation to a system of differences, it has instead to be studied as a generative process not pressed into the general description of a particular people, place, or practice.

I am writing not only against the presuppositional force of ordinary socialization, then, but also the parallel force of scholarly texts that systematize and methodologize socialized perceptions. In order to bring these problematics to the surface, the essays have had to remain programmatically at odds with the discourses in which institutions and publics invest their presumptions to know what is going on, including privileged knowledge of self, knowledge of the Other, scientific knowledge, “and evening newspapers and eyes assured of certain certainties” (recalling some T.S. Eliot I had to memorize in grade school). This kind of critique of objective knowledge became a focus for philosophy during the first half of the Twentieth Century, and interpretive ethnography attempted to incorporate it during the 1980s with only limited long-term success. Whereas the postmodern critiques of scientific and philosophical epistemologies quickly forged battle lines across Academe, however, a very similar framework slowly began to emerge as a linguistic methodology, following the publication of J. L. Austin’s *How To Do Things With Words* (Austin 1975 [1962]). A basic linguistic distinction emerged between referentiality, which is the assumption that words are signs of objects or states of affairs that pre-exist their reflection in language; versus performativity, the potential for language to create the very realities it appears to passively describe.⁵ This time, the argument against representational objectivism met with little professional resistance, perhaps because attention centered on taking apart the ideologies of ordinary rather

⁵ Austin’s initial formulation drew categorical distinctions between the class of performative utterances, such as “I now pronounce you man and wife,” versus constatives like “Those two are married,” but performativity has since led an interesting life, gaining recognition by poststructural theorists (Butler 1993, Sedgwick 2003) as well as sociolinguists who now view it as something closer to a pervasive modality of discourse. Linguistic ideology, defined as “the situated, partial, and interested character of conceptions and uses of language” (Errington 2001: 110; see also Woolard and Schieffelin 1994), becomes the driving force of naturalized understandings. James Wilce (1998) has described Bangladeshi labels of “madness” as an imposition of referential ideology upon performative discourses, and has explored schizophrenia as a breakdown in the “appropriate” use of referential language (2000, 2004). Kang (2006) presents an Indonesian example in which the performativity of magical language marks Petalangers as irrational and undeveloped (although the Petalangan genres are shown to be in a complex process of change in response to these ideologies).

than scholarly communicative practices. The result is the field of discourse pragmatics, which replaces the post-Enlightenment priority of rational language with an understanding of language as a non-privileged social practice. I explore the pragmatics of individualistic practical ruptures, especially my blindness, within discourse and other, more obviously embodied interactions. One way to read the essay collection is as a reformulation of the radical critique of objectivism addressed to the framework of professional anthropology, this time grounded on analysis of particular sites where objectivism exhibits profoundly disabling consequences.

The starting point will be a nominal and philosophical idea that seems to be the nub of my everyday experience of being disabled. What interests me are the pragmatics of disability as an apparition (i.e., an “appearing”) of individual difference. Communicative practices of all sorts, as practices, presuppose a certain largely tacit knowledge of what participants share, and to a usually imperceptible or intangible degree this assumption always misses the mark. Individual difference obtrudes past the “largelies” and “usuallies” of collective life. It is the uniqueness that obtains within a particular interaction, left unincorporated as a result of the uncritical tendencies of ordinary experience. What I have described as a “sphere of rupture,” as the case in point, repeatedly re-emerges across social fields, constituting an identifiable disability; but it is generated by micrological social dynamics rather than a privately owned quality. I stress individuality, in part to give a counterspin to how clinical psychology uses the same terminology, and also in contrast to ethnography’s object, cultural difference, which tends to be the unmarked referent of unqualified difference. Derrida (1978) and Deleuze (1994 [1968]), both of whom play prominent roles in these essays, figure difference “in itself,” and yet as philosophy transits to the plane of human history, becoming anthropology, we have to mark difference as we find it: in particular. At the same time, we have somehow to do so without reducing it to a system of pre-constituted collective differences like races or cultures.

Individual difference is that which goes unterritorialized by the term from which it differs while remaining unclaimed by any ordinary communicative practice. It has the same impossible referent as Wittgenstein's idea of a private language. Nevertheless, sometimes this thing—this no-thing, I suppose—has considerable affective and practical force. Individual difference is disabling.

The cultural phenomenon of blindness and an immediate experience attributed to blindness are among the performative expressions of individual difference, which are nevertheless transacted as constatives, usually of a category of physiological difference. The ordinary interpreting gaze continually drives any apparition of difference—awkwardness, frustration, incompetencies, non-standard comportments, etc., all of which manifest themselves only in the social field—back into the disability category as its defining qualifications. The ordinary sense of the disability category solidifies as a determinate negation of what an unimpaired body can do, while the sociological process of the scene's production is dissociated. The apparent cross-contextual regularities of this emerging category are ascribed to qualities of the disabled person, so that the category remains mystified and intrinsically damaging through the undifferentiating force of the category itself—the sense that disability has an objective referent—in addition to the particular disabling context in which it is manifested. Hence, the apparition cannot be directly addressed using ordinary discourse. Suspension of the disability category means that the blindness of walking down the street and the blindness of knowing when I'm being spoken to in a crowded room needn't be tied to the same essential quality, but are merely tied at a surface level to a word I can bracket at the outset of a critical phenomenology and then return to in a discussion of public circulations of discourse.

The first step is to frame most if not all fields of action as communicative and hence interpersonal.⁶ I'll focus here on solitary

⁶ Habermas built his theory of communicative action upon the same observation, but the people in his society come to share ideas in communion through a process of rational

occupation of the built environment in order to make the point using an example that may seem counter-intuitive to most readers. The structure, rules, and artifacts of a street corner can be understood as the displaced effects of how a public's needs, desires, or chores have been interpreted and addressed by the architects of that scene. Only the scene of their labor and the scene of usage have been sequestered from one another, opening a space of practical and semiotic play with what are now free-standing signs. I am concerned with mundane and comparatively unplayful spaces in which assumptions about the generalized other of a public establish fairly rigid preconditions of use. Freedom of movement is what architects produce, although shoppers, earbud-wearing students, graffiti taggers, and other passers-by will conceive of what they are doing as internally-organized self-expression. Prostitutes, police, and beggars who work the same street, by contrast, likely have a more critical eye on its social structure and organization. Agency—that is, the ability to have an intentional impact on the field—is the use value of these kinds of materially displaced communications. Once you've experienced not-being-addressed by the most passive structures of the built environment for whatever reason, there's no retreating from the sense of someone out there behind it all, someone for whom you are mute and invisible.

Agency is nowhere distributed democratically, even in public space, and even in a simple tool. In its design, a chair anticipates a range of bodies and embodied uses in the same way that a modern urban street anticipates vehicular traffic, largely at the expense of pedestrians and certainly at the expense of anyone who doesn't meet tacit standards of mobility. The ideology of personal independence is grounded on the ability to take these productions of agency for granted. Deborah Marks (1999) notes that this observation has been shown to describe men's positions in traditional marriages, and notes as well that the idea of dependence regarding the

discourse. I do not conceive of communicative action as necessarily leading to agreement and in fact am more interested in the possibility of hearing and speaking to others who cannot be condensed into the mirror image of oneself.

disabled takes its meaning within this same ideology: critical disability studies holds that “people's level of independence should relate to their autonomy and control over their own lives, rather than on the ability to perform particular technical activities.” Disabled people’s “needs,” consequently, “are not located simply in their individual bodies. Instead, they are located in a relationship between those whose needs are met automatically—and are therefore seen as having no needs - and those whose needs are not met and who must make a special plea for assistance and support” (Marks 1999: 97). Thus, in disability we are always observing the products of socially-constructed competences and their concomitant fields of choice, not physiological incapacities that are meaningful in themselves. This statement tracks a salient consequence of Karl Marx’s understanding of the artifact as congealed labor, but a consequence that extends beyond the world framed by self-interested exercises of power, which of course has been the conventional backdrop for discussions of agency.⁷

I should pause here to acknowledge that there exists a Disability Movement which has spent thirty years seeking to redress precisely this exclusiveness built into the naturalized social environment, although I’m not aware of anyone framing the problem in terms of communicative practice. Again, though, oppositional politics addresses generalized products, not generative processes. the political awareness that one is “Passing” as the member of a normative category is, for example, the condition that obtains when a bundle of communicative practices becomes a palpable sense of self-incarceration, which simultaneously renders up the sense that the horizon of the Other is describable (“you people!”). But even this oppositional awareness will be difficult to formulate with any specificity in the absence of affirmative practices of difference, which of course at that point have become

⁷ An inadequacy of Marx’s critique of capital likewise surfaces in this idea of need as a socially-erased, socially-constructed perception. Marx frequently references “the hands of the worker,” with this opaque and uniform body, the only idea of the individual incorporated into his philosophy. Human needs and their satisfaction can be imagined as part of a natural state only by way of this idea of the innately productive and independent individual.

instead sharedness, thereby moving into a more familiar anthropological field.

The social condition of the blind does in some ways resemble hegemonic oppression of consciousness, but unless we can identify an independent ethos being repressed (i.e., the possibility of political recognition and emancipation of a disabled subject who somehow remains affirmatively disabled) or a particular group's investment in keeping the disabled down, oppression is too blunt an instrument for understanding particular interactions.⁸ Since my argument is that all practice "oppresses" individual difference, that term can't be applied without dissolving its usefulness. Every time I extrude a commensurable, communicable bit of behavior and maintain it for the purpose of making a connection, this act occludes my difference from the other so that it is no longer available to my experience of myself, interlocutors' experiences of me, or the ethnographer's eye. Without a pre-existent contrastive set of practices that can highlight alternative possibilities for self awareness, this dissociation of difference usually goes unnoticed, although perhaps leaving the residue of an affect that will likely be misinterpreted as the familiar sign of one's inherently incompetent self or the supposedly discriminatory attitudes of others. More fundamentally, individual difference comprises what the sharedness of social practice tends to press out of the ordinary potentials for experience.

Benjamin Whorf presents the idea of a Hopi cosmology in which thoughts, coming from the heart, operate on things in the world rather than mental representations (Whorf 1998 [1936, 1941]: 59-64, 149-50). Only within a Western theory of mind does this notion seem impossible. Surely,

⁸ For example, deaf sign language users can conceive of themselves as a linguistic minority, which clarifies the social-relational ground of an experience of their being disabled by a public. Without such a shared practice, groups who seek to affirm a physiological difference categorized as disability will largely be experiencing the alleviation of the conditions in which the disability forms. Blindness is not an experience outside the context of a disability, except insofar as the blind can experience its practical absence and sharedness in the context of, say, a convention of the blind (see Chapter 4). If a value horizon somehow intrinsic to the blind does exist or would naturally exist if not for its lack of incorporation, then, certainly, it is oppressed.

the ability to have thoughts outside one's body is at the root of discourse pragmatics and the possibility of culture. "Language must hence from an ontogenetic and sociocultural perspective be conceived of as a prosthetic device by which individual mental activity is expanded and transformed into genuinely communicative activity" (Rommetveit 1998: 357). The human animal has skin as thin as tissue paper, claws defeated by shrink wrap, a nose absurdly far from all the informative smells, almost no night vision, hearing that is selective as well as insensitive, and can't outrun any predators larger than a Jack Russell terrier. Balanced against these interspecies deficits, we have a cybernetic ability to organize collective action to such a degree that the Earth itself is transformed. Everything we have called culture and society (which is not to say all individual behaviors) accommodates limited capacities of the fundamentally inadequate individual human organism, and has done so very obviously more on the principle of urban sprawl than a panoptic, rational planned community... which goes especially for the privileged myopia of planned communities. An anthropological understanding conceives language, social institutions, the built environment, social science, and the ideology of independence with this human ecology in mind. For a human, individual difference—as opposed to distinction—is going to hurt. It is going to be excommunicated from practice altogether, a fact that gives a fittingly anthropological sense to the word dissociation.

PAPER DOUBT (READING TEXTS AS CULTURE)

They say, the ethnographer's consciousness is divided, because she is part participant and part withdrawn analyst. I call that everyday survival as a blind person, and yet there's still something further, a feeling of being more present to the played-back recording than to the event. I mean this literally: I am more embodied in the moment of transcription, when I can concentrate, than I am in the event, when my aural attention is necessarily

divided. It's a sensation I came to recognize as having been beneath the ground of my experience all the time as a result of the multiple modes of active scanning my mind has to do to extrapolate a functional understanding of the scene from inadequate sources.

Maybe this is why, as I'm beginning to notice, many blind people record their lives in hi-fidelity stereo sound and thereafter publish these stretches of time to the Web as so-called "sound-seeing tours" of so many baby showers, ferry rides across the bay, weddings, and tours of their apartments (is this the same impulse as the to-me incomprehensible obsession with the Kodak moment?). The publication constitutes their private experiences, falling just short of graphomania and usually well short of recording anything that perceptibly juts out of the ordinary. The practice is not unique to the blind, but still one wonders what it "does" as a thoroughly unsorted, unthematized, and therefore unreflexive publication of memory. Instead of building a coherent story about oneself or one another, they just keep pushing more audio fragments onto the stack. I can't stand listening to them, because I can't learn anything from them beyond the fact of their circulation.

For the ethnographer, the hyphen in participant-observation marks a freedom to modulate between two modalities of experience, and it is this modulation that generates knowledge across cultural horizons. To be disabled is to be anomalous to both; the recording is immersive while I, in the event, am somewhat speculative. When I went blind, then, I not surprisingly went to the library. I went looking for some language on which to hang an experience of blindness, which I had already begun apprehensively to call a "language disability." At some point, however, my self-education became something very different from "reading the literature," because neither the anthropology section (section GN) nor disability studies (section HV) addressed my nagging sense of what blindness was, unless I severely flattened my experience to suit the categorical subjects they described. Here, too, the pragmatics of individual difference were at play. I

began to work through the warrants and histories of texts, questioning them more in the way of objects of analysis than authoritative scholarly “sources.”

Scholarly texts are the beginning as well as end of sociological knowledge. The ideology that research investigates an object—a “penetrating” analysis—permits the researcher to ignore the sociology of the text because the book as faithful representation has the appearance of an end in itself (Oliver 1999). The scholarly text as a fetishized product tends to occlude our awareness of the fact that texts, from their inception, take part in wider circuits of personal, professional, and public activity. A pragmatics approach to scholarship constitutes a protocol of reading different from one in which data texts are read as documents of experience while theory texts are read as good or bad, true or false, interesting or not, addressed to my field or not, current or outmoded, semi-miraculous representations of what the author saw. The latter reading assesses the text in terms of our present values, often understood to be objective standards of scholarship. We often call This procedure “evaluating” the text. As a special topic, we sometimes acknowledge the scholarly work to be a product of its historical context, but it’s a far more difficult task to additionally encounter it as written—as a highly contingent moment of discourse and experience, aspects of which are recoverable (Silverstein and Urban 1996), starting with the contextual, economically interested, performative dimension of one’s present reading.

Early on, I began recording the distances between English publication dates and the first dated appearances of texts, either as manuscripts or publication in their first language. These initially idle notations gradually opened a thought-provoking space between the communities of the producers and consumers of texts like Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (1982 [1975, 1960]) or the reworked version of Bakhtin’s 1929 book on Dostoyevsky (Bakhtin 1984 [1961]). The bracketing of these earlier histories, which sometimes index geopolitical as well as scholarly moments at both ends, start to convey an impression that we might just be reliving so many adventures in bad intellectual karma. However, the kind of

historicizing that would pinpoint the bracketed dates as the origins of particular ideas would be a useless exercise. Instead, the brackets differentiate the bibliographic citations internally so that they make up a simple heuristic device by which I have been prompted to encounter the cited work as an artifact with a biography, a history, and an ecology. The effect is to make the tacit evolutionary narrative of linear scholarly progress difficult to maintain. This sort of textual pragmatics tracks through a diffuse field held together by the course through which semiotic matter circulates, this virtual field being observed in particular actual exchanges.⁹ Ethnography is one of the formations circumscribed within such a circuit. The deconstruction of “reading the literature” as a referential ideology marks the point where discourse pragmatics and the postiest postmodernism overlap. The text is a factory, not a theater.

Strange to say, encountering the surfaces around us constitutes one of the most difficult things humans aspire to do. It takes a linguist to encounter language at its surface, behind and in front of the encounter with meaning, presupposition, and the past. It takes an ethnographer to encounter what people do beyond what they think they are doing, and a critic to read a text for what it says and how it works instead of what it evokes in oneself personally. The surface is almost impossible to come by, but that is where one is in the present. I suspect that if the Interpretive Turn in ethnography had originated among anthropologists instead of diffusing from literary criticism and philosophy, anthropologists would have fastened not on the meaningful text but on the much older etymology of text as textile, a thing woven, something with a texture. Certainly, there were already ample references to the warps and woofs of culture and spun webs of significance by that point. Craftsmanship and aesthetic value still apply and can be

⁹ Haraway (1991 [1985]) uses the term “integrated circuit” in a similar way, and the usage is echoed in Spivak (1988), Strathern (1991: 54), and Sedgwick (2003: 32ff). The process—circulation—has become central to the study of capitalism (Lee and Lipuma 2002, Briggs 2004) and publics (Urban 2001, Warner 2002). I’ve found myself very often relying on the idea of a circuit in reference to the not-quite-closed system of cultural production, consumption, and reproduction, where circulation is a prerequisite condition for all three.

tracked, but textiles have an advantage: we still encounter them as artifacts before expressions, and we want to know what they do before we ask what they mean. As it was, interpretive ethnography went through its culture-as-a-text phase ("read any good cultures lately?"), which had the shortcoming of blurring the distinction between the ethnographic representation as literary work and as theoretically adequate portrayal of local human conditions. In other words, one problem was that the cultural worlds were fashioned with such nice integration and richness that they required an author, whose identity no one could quite fix on as either the natives or the ethnographer. On the other hand, the text and the writing of it certainly succeed in formulating experiences in a new, productive, condensed form. As a method for passively recording culture, the question "what does it mean?" is suspect (because it is never passive), but the record of the text is itself a cultural document. All texts are. Texts are active in the contrary forces of the regimentation and reordering of experience. They communicate experiences reflexively to the author and intersubjectively, creatively, in the reading. The reading, if it is in turn recorded, documents the reader, just as the writing documents the writer. Textuality allows this kind of reflexivity. In theory, it is infinitely recursive; in practice, this fact is only a problem for those who insist on a final reading. An active surface, one never claiming to be anything but artifact, is always available. There is therefore a virtue in immersing oneself after the fact.

The failure of an ethnography to ever quite close solidly enough, which social science must apprehend as a real problem even as humanists celebrate it, has been my point of entry into another way of reading scholarly texts. And, ultimately, into writing them.

I claimed to begin with a confession, but that's not quite true.¹⁰ The ordinary sense of that speech act involves exposing something internal, raw, and private. Accordingly, the story I assembled earlier implies that my repeated attempts to either be an ethnographer or read ethnography were "really" scenes of an oblique encounter with blindness after the fashion of a return of the repressed, unless it's the oppressed or depressed. In reality, my experiences of my theorized self are constructed on the page, and the self knowledge I record is discovered sociologically. Perhaps this statement has become less in need of explanation in the age of the word processor and the Web. Regarding my "online" identity, the point will never be to take a story I tell as a representation of an experience prior to the text, but to understand what cultural dynamics have to be in place in order for any such story to have emerged and seem plausible and coherent. For me, the line between embodied experience and text is uncommonly blurred, and even abstract. Individual difference may be embodyable only by way of writing.

As has become plain by now, I hope, my target is neither blindness nor disability, but the presuppositional force of discourse and other practices. The essays elaborate a mode of anthropological critique capable of addressing itself to forms of difference, disabling in their consequences, that remain unattended or misrecognized (or are produced) by the study of shared practices. They highlight the objectifying and therefore pre-conceptualizing tendencies of the ethnographic field, which bears the marks of being modeled on the visual field, the only sense modality with both a

¹⁰ Van Maanen (1988) nicely unpacks the rhetoric of anthropology's confessional tales, which are those anti-realist accounts that point out the production of the research while nevertheless remaining distinguishable from the ethnographic representation. "Though confessional writers are forthcoming with accounts of errors, misgivings, limiting research roles, and even misperceptions," he writes (p. 79), "they are unlikely to come to the conclusion that they have been misled dramatically, that they got it wrong, or that they have otherwise presented falsehoods to their trusting audience." Foucault (1990 [1976]) wrote of confession as an exposure coerced by a discipline, which in a sense describes today's enduring residue of ethnographic reflexivity. However, he rethought his position (1999 [1982]), conceiving it as a more flexible constitutive publication of self, as discussed by Butler (2005: 112): "Confession in this context presupposes that the self must appear in order to constitute itself and that it can constitute itself only within a given scene of address, within a certain socially constituted relation. Confession becomes the verbal and bodily scene of its self-demonstration. It speaks itself, but in the speaking it becomes what it is."

center and horizon (Ihde 1976). Individual difference, on the contrary, can be felt on the skin as a series of contrasts, and the event-sensation of contrast is the apparition of difference. Eyes closed, a touch from nowhere, just before you step back, eyes open, to classify what it is: the implicit idea of the (masculine) objectifying gaze is rather shop-worn, but it helps conjure an apt image. Touch is utterly confined to the present time and space, which is not to say it is unmediated but that the practice of reading culture by touch—a critique instead of an investigation—is a fundamentally different exercise than reading the field of vision and passing through that field toward desired objects. In terms of Malinowski’s classic formula, observation and participation turn out to be mobile exercises in which vision plays a fundamental role, as I explore further in the next two chapters. They therefore give way to interrogation, conducted in place and in time like a conversation, a bricolage of irreducibly different perspectives to reckon with.

THE SEMANTIC MITIGATION OF EXPERIENCE IN HELEN KELLER’S *THE STORY OF MY LIFE*¹¹

Here is an unconventional story about language acquisition. It can be read productively in company with two very well-developed scholarly literatures. One of these dismantles the assumption that “the self” is an individually owned, internally organized property, in favor of an idea of selfhood as a discursive trope always emergent in particular contexts of social interaction (Mead 1934, Ryle 1949, Johnstone 1970; discussions carried into anthropology and psychology represent enormous literatures). The other does much the same job on the Western category of “experience,” where the view that experience is a natural processing of sense data has largely been replaced with the study of experience as a practical and discursive accomplishment (Bauman 1986, Linde 1993, Desjarlais 1997,

¹¹ My source is the 1903 text, but from an online edition published by the American Foundation for the Blind entitled “Helen Keller—In Her Own Words: The 100th Anniversary of *The Story of My Life*” (<http://www.afb.org/mylife/book.asp?ch=HK-intro>).

Stern 1997, Mattingly 1998; again, however, the literature is extensive and multidisciplinary). The question "where does language come from?" can be answered with reference either to innate cognitive structures, which do seem to be in there, doing whatever they do, or else with reference to a social career in which human primates cognize and recognize other consciousnesses and schemas of action that harness consciousness in practical, communicable ways. I wouldn't suggest trying to learn language without either socialization or a brain. But certainly the case of Helen Keller, left deaf and blind at 19 months by illness, should provide some insight into either or both processes by virtue of its representing a boundary case. Although Helen did see and hear and during those months learned a few words "tea and wa-wa, for example), the idea of language had to be taught her formally through a pedagogy invented for the occasion. It was a scene of communicating across irrevocable difference. Be forewarned, though, that an attempt to read these historical records empirically for new knowledge about language acquisition will be frustrated. What one emerges with instead is a theory of how experience circulates in written texts. What I suggest is that the referent of what one would want to call (i.e., what I originally sought to call) Helen's experience of blind deafness remains dissociated from communicative practice and, for all we can tell, from Helen's experience of herself. She gets on very well, regardless, in terms of social incorporation and the vocation she took up as advocate for the deaf and blind.

A few weeks after Ann Sullivan's arrival, Helen came to understand that the objects around her had a series of hand signs associated with them. "Doll," moreover, was the same series of signs for both her dolls. Then, the stumbling block: "Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is mug and that "w-a-t-e-r" is water , but I persisted in confounding the two." Miss Sullivan's persistence ultimately prompted Helen to destroy her new doll in frustration. "In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness." Then it was out to the pump in the yard,

where Miss Sullivan put one of Helen's hands under the flowing water while signing "water" into the other, slowly then quickly. "Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me." In her letter following the event (April 5, 1887), Ann Sullivan remarks that Helen then showed affection to her for the first time and expressed curiosity about the names of other people. "The word coming so close upon the sensation of cold water rushing over her hand seemed to startle her," Sullivan writes. "She dropped the mug and stood as one transfixed. A new light came into her face. She spelled "water" several times. Then she dropped on the ground and asked for its name and pointed to the pump and the trellis, and suddenly turning round she asked for my name." Helen continues: "Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life."

When "water" became a sign detachable from the drinking and became an object—a reliable sameness that could be brought into relation to her—both predication and the self apparently became possible. What has happened is the opening of the potential for an exchange system of value as a social order beyond immediate use value. She has gained the human ability to communicate about non-present states of affairs by means other than pantomime (which in a sense presents its referent using the body, with just the one physical thing absent). She has transited from a world in which self and experience were organized within the present context to a world in which they are drawn to a process of organization within a social order. For Helen, this advent would have developed by her twenties into a rhetorical style characterized by a heavy reliance on visual imagery, romantic metaphor, and intertextual allusion.

On the first page of her youthful memoir, Helen describes the process of remembering her life as "lifting the veil that clings about my childhood like a golden mist," by which she is contextually making reference precisely to

the problem of remembering a past and absent self. Her entry into language and the entry of Anne Sullivan into her life are ultimately two remembered modulations of the same moment, and these two stories are cast onto one another in the telling, thereby formulating her experience within the act of appearing to record it. Everything she reports about her life before Ann Sullivan is a presentiment of that moment, in other words, reported from its far side. After several vivid descriptions of smells and touch, as well as noting the precise date and her age (three months before her seventh birthday), she describes a sense of expectancy she caught from others' activities that would turn out to be in anticipation of Ann Sullivan's arrival:

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbour was. "Light! Give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

A contemporary exasperation with this residue of Victorian prose would respond to the anthropomorphized ship with "no, have you?" Another mystical lifted shroud, then: any path one might cut through this array of metaphors in search of a more prosaic meaning would either track the literary text in terms of its archetypes (fog, ship, etc., all of which have conventionalized symbolic usages in English) or else reduce the passage to the overall impression that she was, say, expectant. Decoration here stands in for words that otherwise do not seem to have a more elaborate referent than that simple word. Meanwhile the complete image of the simile must have been experienced by Helen in terms of language she encountered in other contexts, wherein things like fog and compasses take on their portable emotional valences. In other words, an image the sighted reader will link to an embodied image functions, for Helen, as a comparatively abstract cipher she has learned to deploy appropriately across contexts. Whatever image

may or may not accompany the word for Helen, we simply have no idea of, nor can we know that she knows.

Helen also uses direct or indirect quotations and inserts them in place of, rather than in conjunction with, descriptions of embodied experience. For example, here is her evaluation of the first thunderstorm she can remember: "I had learned a new lesson—that nature 'wages open war against her children, and under softest touch hides treacherous claws'" (the quote comes from Robert Louis Stevenson's "Pan's Pipes"). Such allusions are so frequent that they begin to stand out for me much like a glaring red "SENSORED" sign stamped over the personally authored text, but that is not what is going on. Quotation was a valued way to show one's "breeding," meaning one's superior class and family quality as demonstrated by education. I suggest that what one might call the public beautification project of Victorian prose—perhaps especially women's genteel prose, and perhaps most especially that of a sheltered young woman writing her way into social incorporation and recognition as something other than a freak—provided a publicly-available resource by which individual difference could be mitigated, which is to say that Helen could communicate her radically individualistic experiences through quotation and other metaphoric gestures. However, she communicated them by obviating the encounter with them, whether she was trying to do this or, as seems more likely, could conjure no better linguistic resources than these for sharing them. The home ground of the experience ostensibly pointed out by her metaphors and allusions are unspecified, and may be unspecifiable. Perhaps her embodied experience can only be formulated by way of other domains, because there is no sense in which they exist "in themselves."

Finally, she utilizes a related process in which someone else's verbal account becomes the basis for Helen's claim to an experience. On August 17, 1893, she wrote to a friend about her experience at the Chicago World's Fair: "I think I enjoyed the sails on the tranquil lagoon and the lovely scenes as my friends described them more than anything else at the fair. Once,

when we were out on the water, the sun went down over the rim of the Earth and threw a soft, rosy light across the white city, making it look more than ever like dream land.” Again, a surface reading today recognizes the standards for polite prose of the era (fairyland, indeed), and I do not have access to Helen as a speaker. If we take her at her word, however, and then attempt a more active encounter with her experience, we have to consider that Helen’s world consisted of physical contact (including sound waves and odor), Braille (through Annie Sullivan as typist, in particular), and signs formed against her hand. If, after being allowed the chance to touch any exhibit she liked, her favorite part was a visual image, then perhaps the strongest resonance belongs to the social relation, the appreciation of the physical experience of others; or, equally likely, the enjoyment belongs to the virtual—to the imagination as her primary reality, which had just been augmented in a beautiful way.¹² A function of such experience must surely be her participation in a social order.

Metaphor, as a transfer of the sense of an object from one domain to another, has been shown to be a basic constituent of both semantics and experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Fernandez 1986, Johnson 1987). Taken as given is that the human body can experience the metaphor’s target domain concretely in a non-metaphorical way. Sensibility of money as a concrete object or the concrete experience of economic exchange allows us to subsequently experience time as “saved” or “spent.” The exchangeability of value across semantic domains in this way constitutes the economy of language. Throughout her autobiographical writing, Helen’s use of metaphor serves to semantically mitigate the unsharedness of her embodiment, such that the overall sense is that of perhaps flowery or schooled prose expressing

¹² Compare her much later description of a sunset in her journal entry for November 8, 1936, where she is more explicit about embodiment’s relationship to metaphor: “This evening, after a brilliant day, Polly kept telling me how marvelous the sunset was. She said sky and sea were suffused with a rose tinge defying the power of the brush or the pen to capture. Often I had felt petals showered upon me by a passing breeze; so I could imagine the sunset as a vast rose-garden from which the petals had been shaken, and were drifting through the sky before sinking into the grey November night” (Keller 1938).

her personal experience quite eloquently. Yet in terms of mechanics, the target domain of the metaphor is generally not an embodied experience or an experience that would be embodyable by Helen herself. The completed sentence of the form "subject+verb+[allusion or metaphor]" provides the means for Helen to employ the largely discursive world she inhabited as a reader of others' texts to specify her embodied (now we need a question mark for this term) experience. The sentence passes on an experience, passing over the question of embodiment. Her "strategy," which may well not be pre-meditated, works so well that she appears to be an excellent writer by any contemporaneous standard, and yet we really learn very little about something called "her world."

We seldom have occasion to recognize the probably enormous extent to which ordinary language usage—what Bakhtin calls its inner dialogism—generates what passes as embodied experience by way of formulas learned from the discourse of interlocutors, although at a critical distance we are more aware of how such formulas become a substitute for reflexivity (e.g., everyone on the news describes personal tragedy as if all were trying out for the same movie role). Banalities, formulas, strange language, and cop-outs like "it is unspeakable" or "indescribable" in commonplace speech situations prompt one of at least three responses from the listener (these constitute a politics of the utterance): dismissal, interrogation, or passivity. If we as the listener catch on an image like fog-bound ships or golden mists, we can interrogate by asking "what do you mean?" Or, we can hang up on it and decide not to care, dismissing anything in the utterance that is contingent on it and just parsing the utterance without that part. Most often, there is no rupture so long as the habits of usage are maintained and there are viable selections in the right slots, combined with appropriate syntax. Passively, the listener is left to specify underdetermined elements, to whatever extent seems warranted, with what passes for a normal range of possibilities that by definition needn't be specified immediately. That is, we work to bend unfamiliar language into our version of what it could mean, based on our own

perspectives. Tropes like “indescribable” actively promote this kind of disattention, since one is asked to intuit nothing very specific at all other than something affective. Of the three, only the interrogation does anything but return to us what we already know. One can read Helen’s memoir easily enough and come away with the feeling that one has learned the story of her life. Interrogation of the text turns out to be far more difficult.

Helen projects spiritual sanguineness on every page, and that smooth, utterly “composed” face is one I can’t believe, one I as a particular reader tried and failed to crack in order to read some subtext. I want her to struggle with discourse, to show signs of a technology of self, to have a desire, to demonstrate agency against something and discover its limitations. But the discourses of a well-thought-out spiritualism, a discourse of affirmation, fulfillment, and progress runs from cover to cover, and from one book to the next throughout her career, with only a very few indistinct internal fractures into which one might lever a critical theory about the production of the author and the text.

There are days when the close attention I must give to details chafes my spirit, and the thought that I must spend hours reading a few chapters, while in the world without other girls are laughing and singing and dancing, makes me rebellious; but I soon recover my buoyancy and laugh the discontent out of my heart. For, after all, every one who wishes to gain true knowledge must climb the Hill Difficulty alone, and since there is no royal road to the summit, I must zigzag it in my own way. I slip back many times, I fall, I stand still, I run against the edge of hidden obstacles, I lose my temper and find it again and keep it better, I trudge on, I gain a little, I feel encouraged, I get more eager and climb higher and begin to see the widening horizon. Every struggle is a victory. One more effort and I reach the luminous cloud, the blue depths of the sky, the uplands of my desire.

Metaphor triumphs again. Which modality of experience counts as primary and which secondary, which concrete, which personal and which cultural?

In the end, I’m the one who is forced to rely on a sort of metaphor—specifically, a potentially invalid trick of up-scaling the unit of analysis—in

order to encounter a scene of Helen caught in a process of self-production rather than as a finished, polished product of what must have been an ongoing struggle. In 1892, a year after she learned to speak, she wrote a short story that the Perkins Institute printed in one of their publications. When a very similar story was found, written before her birth, she was accused of plagiarism and was put on a sort of trial before the faculty and officers of the Institute. "I racked my brain until I was weary to recall anything about the frost that I had read before I wrote "The Frost King;" but I could remember nothing, except the common reference to Jack Frost, and a poem for children, "The Freaks of the Frost," and I knew I had not used that in my composition."

Here are the results of the investigation by which Helen was linked to the other text. It was used to explain the formal congruities with Helen's story:

With the assistance of Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, [Ann Sullivan] investigated the matter carefully, and at last it came out that Mrs. Sophia C. Hopkins had a copy of Miss Canby's "Birdie and His Friends" in 1888, the year that we spent the summer with her at Brewster. Mrs. Hopkins was unable to find her copy; but she has told me that at that time, while Miss Sullivan was away on a vacation, she tried to amuse me by reading from various books, and although she could not remember reading "The Frost Fairies" any more than I, yet she felt sure that "Birdie and His Friends" was one of them. She explained the disappearance of the book by the fact that she had a short time before sold her house and disposed of many juvenile books, such as old schoolbooks and fairy tales, and that "Birdie and His Friends" was probably among them. The stories had little or no meaning for me then; but the mere spelling of the strange words was sufficient to amuse a little child who could do almost nothing to amuse herself; and although I do not recall a single circumstance connected with the reading of the stories, yet I cannot help thinking that I made a great effort to remember the words, with the intention of having my teacher explain them when she returned. One thing is certain, the language was ineffaceably stamped upon my brain, though for a long time no one knew it, least of all myself.

She attributes the re-emergence of the story to “unconscious retention,” although the exact point where plagiarism begins and the repetition of natural language learning ends remains hazy. We might even consider her reproduction of the earlier text, if that is what went on, to be an outgrowth of the habits she had developed as part of the mitigation of her experience.

My thoughts flowed easily; I felt a sense of joy in the composition. Words and images came tripping to my finger ends, and as I thought out sentence after sentence, I wrote them on my braille slate. Now, if words and images came to me without effort, it is a pretty sure sign that they are not the offspring of my own mind, but stray waifs that I regretfully dismiss. At that time I eagerly absorbed everything I read without a thought of authorship, and even now I cannot be quite sure of the boundary line between my ideas and those I find in books. I suppose that is because so many of my impressions come to me through the medium of others' eyes and ears.

There is one and only one crisis within the text that remains rhetorically unresolved, and that scene is, for me, the crux of the reading I put to the text. The plagiarism incident has not left her. She carries it as an apprehension into the present scene of writing, and it is a reflexive consciousness capable of instantiating a theory of the self:

I have never played with words again for the mere pleasure of the game. Indeed, I have ever since been tortured by the fear that what I write is not my own. For a long time, when I wrote a letter, even to my mother, I was seized with a sudden feeling of terror, and I would spell the sentences over and over, to make sure that I had not read them in a book. Had it not been for the persistent encouragement of Miss Sullivan, I think I should have given up trying to write altogether.

Departing from conventional usage, I want to define a presentiment is the affect that primes one to encounter the present, because ordinary expectation will deflect presence categorically.¹³ A presentiment isn't

¹³ The Latin *praes* equates with the word “before,” in both the sense of “in front of” as “present” and temporally before, the prefix *pre-*.

primarily a foreshadowing, but the felt, unrepresentable awareness of present particularity. Affect is feeling the present, the fact that something is happening now but which can't be recognized yet. All affect can instruct one to do, however, is to start paying acute attention. This is perhaps the only practical move in the direction of attending to present difference. Helen's apprehensions as she sits down to write may be of this kind. The only way to present the present itself, though, is to creatively put it in the present tense or, as Helen does, in a retrospective that conveys the aspect of being there as events unfold. Both of these construct (fictionally, I would say) presentiments in the sense of conveying a present-making affect. This present is an apparition, something we conclude must be present but which cannot be ordinarily represented or even sensed in its own terms—such as a sighted or hearing person attempting to embody Helen Keller's experience, or Helen herself trying to communicate it. Only in critical moments can these presentiments become experientially productive, leading to new and potentially instrumental self knowledge. Ordinarily, on the other hand, discourse is apt to deflect the particularity of experience in the very process of communication, including the texture of one's own apprehension of it.

Chapter 2. A Crack in the Ground

"Do all the rocks out here have names?" I'm in a gleaming white land cruiser making its way across the Navajo Reservation en route to a settlement north of Tuba City. Baby Rock, which I suppose looks a little like a baby lying on its back, is a huge red statue against a cobalt and yellow back drop. Thinking of Window Rock, Ship Rock, and other such names, I turn to the driver.

David is in his early forties, with wire-rimmed glasses and hair gathered into a knot at the base of his neck. Black slacks and a white dress shirt negotiate between traditional male Navajo dress and the appropriate clothes for a modern pastor who lives in Flagstaff. In what I'm coming to think of as typical Navajo fashion, he considers this simple question a full minute in silence before replying. "Lots of them do." Sixty seconds later, he chuckles, pointing to another monolith, then recounts a story about how Coyote once tricked the People in that spot. He tells the story somehow both as folklore and history at the same time, which is a good skill for a missionary to have. I've always held on to my impression of this trip and this conversation.

We pull up to the church to the sound of gravel crunching beneath the wheels, which to me has always brought comfort, signaling arrival in a rural inter-personal space not yet paved over by capitalist forms of mobility. We join a loose assortment of twenty or so people standing before the totally featureless concrete block building with its cross. next to the church is an open tin-roofed structure with picnic tables alongside (the fellowship hall, at least as we would later use it). The vacant bleachers of the rodeo ring stand across the street. The proper time for church to start will be when everyone arrives, and so I stand, already beginning to sweat in the beating sun (white shirt, black jeans) as David makes his rounds as the mission director on a pastoral visit. A rail-thin old man in a striped dress shirt, tan slacks, dress

belt, and polished boots walks over to me and somehow we are talking about his stint in the Army during World War II—not as a code talker, though, because he says he was “nothing but a drunk” back then. Except for this man, everyone else ignores me, now and throughout David’s bilingual church service and the communal meal afterwards.

To be ignored at church is, first of all, already very refreshingly at odds with the sort of impersonal joviality that takes me as the raw material of Protestant good works—“meet and greet,” which scans very much like “search and destroy.” Second, I am not in fact being given a cold shoulder; I am simply unconnected and no one has any obligations to me, a White non-member, with a familiar tell-tale tape recorder and regulation size spiral notebook, brought by the mission director. Furthermore, in the scene I am recounting, I still qualify as “visually impaired,” though in two years my eye condition will progress suddenly and I will switch to “blind.” The social signal sent by my white cane usually activates a more palpable sense of separation than this, especially when I need something and find that I’m invisible or else am visible in a way that provokes someone to dip in and take things from me or try to get things for me, either to assuage their anxiousness or as another form of spiritual labor. The rare anonymity I am experiencing feels as comfortable as being at home alone. The simple layout of the built environment and silence of the desert help.

After the service ends, I go to stand near David and belatedly realize that a man in a wheelchair is holding out his hand to shake mine. His face wears a wide grin. I once heard a wheelchair-bound journalist explain that in Latin America, his disability carried very little of the stigma it does in the U.S. As I would phrase it now, when something breaks, an American returns it under warranty, gets it fixed, or throws it away; while in less-privileged zones, one takes what one has and lives with it. I leave the Res with the lasting impression of the wheelchair-bound man’s respectful handshake, which seemed in fact to have nothing to do with either of our stigmata at all.

Only many years later would I suddenly realize that my standing next to David had constituted me as part of the greeting line. A pastor always ushers worshipers from the sanctuary, and they are bound to offer a handshake to anyone occupying this position. Regardless of what kind of interloper I am, given that I am not a worshiper and neither sang or recited with them, a Navajo can still observe etiquette and pointedly be observed doing so; while a Christian can practice charity. Navajos don't often grin like that, either.

FIRTH AND I

The most primitive documents from which my writing for this project has drawn are voice recordings made at all hours of the day or night when I was too exhausted by computer-generated speech to read or write (both activities are for me entirely mediated by text-to-speech synthesis). Some notes are attempts at a theoretical synthesis of different areas of scholarship, while others serve an obvious therapeutic function by abstracting the conditions of my life to a place where they would be described in anthropological terms. At their best, the notes are so unconcerned with genre that theory and experience can't be separated. A comparison to psychotherapy has occurred to me, but that discourse proceeds toward a different kind of "adaptive" resolution that interests me very little. In a sense, all of the essays are transcriptions from a body of recordings, but then again all books largely are. The following discussion is not particularly linear, bearing instead the traces of the practice of taking headnotes in sound, the only one-dimensional medium. Beyond a certain point, I found it counterproductive to override these traces. The structure conveys some sense of the dialectical process in which I used the idea of Ethnography to disclose the fabric of blindness while using that experience to question Ethnography.

My brief period of Navajo fieldwork took place in 1995 and sought to describe how something as ineffable, transformative, and epistemological as faith could be communicated through ordinary language and an adopted set of fairly mundane practices. Today, I can't remember my rationale as to why my writings about those four months of research were so entirely devoid of narratives or of any reference to embodied experiences, but the document reads like the panoptic and causal social-structural accounts of the 1960s, front to back. For example:

While rigid theology and forms of practice will be discussed later, there are also several aspects of Christianity which have found unique manifestations among Navajos. First, services are conducted bilingually in response to the linguistic backgrounds of congregations, though there is a definite trend toward English. Second, services on the Reservation conclude with a communal meal, just as traditional Navajo ceremonies do. Perhaps because the meal comes after--and is thus not a part of--Navajo religious functions, it is perceived as a strictly social activity which, since it brings participants in the religious function together as a community, is maintained by Christians. Third, religious functions are not as tightly scheduled as their Anglo counterparts. It is the fact that the event takes place, rather than when or for how long, which is of most importance. Services can therefore last several hours, from the beginning of Sunday school to the communal meal and beyond. Fourth, tent meetings play a major role as a means of cementing social bonds in a Christian context. Tent meetings occur several times per year and last several days, during which time meals, hymns, preaching, prayer, and less sacred social activities take on increased intensity through the large number of participants and the nature of the meeting as a special occasion. Fifth, the specific rituals practiced by FMN pastors express a particular character, though the Mission churches are nondenominational. Of these, most significant by far is baptism. As a symbol of spiritual rebirth, this rite receives great emphasis where other varieties of Christianity (in the context of cultures which have integrated Christian practices into the mainstream, such as the U.S. or the European Community) practice infant baptism and appeal to other rites of initiation for adults such as catechism or other fundamentally liturgical performances.

The 70-page ethnography is an unvariegated edifice of authoritative statements about the mission's practices in their Navajo, Christian, and American cultural contexts. As one likely contributing factor, I was in my first semester of anthropology graduate training and was adapting my academic voice to that of a social scientist, pith-helmeted if not pithy. Of course, the proscription to "overcome blindness" and learn to dodge any potential source of discrimination was also likely in play. The ability to conflate my own observations and the consensus of reports made by informants during random moments often appears, in my texts, to sideslip the problematic fact that even my "direct" observations are largely by virtue of informants' interpretations of what is going on, as well as their selective reports of what objects and people exist in the scene.

Under the rules of topically-organized ethnography, this collapsing was not a sin and not particularly relevant. For example, John Gwaltney (1970) pursued fieldwork as a blind ethnographer by grounding his descriptions in conversations and interviews with informants who "made statements that were apt and indicative of general Yolenos Chinantec ethos" in order to "afford some Yolenos an opportunity to speak for their own culture," although in fact some of these audited reports were municipal records read to him by field assistants. Margaret Mead's letter of recommendation envisions Gwaltney's fieldwork in a way very different from the Mead-surrounded-by-children image that had become the standard: "Blinded at two months, he manages his life and work with extraordinary skill and bravery, including the most onerous fieldwork alone in a Mexican village" (Freedman 1998). The layers of relationships and in fact co-authorships of Gwaltney's field experiences are all erased.¹⁴ Gwaltney's subsequent classic of native ethnography, *Drylongso*

¹⁴ In an appendix, Gwaltney describes the technologies that enabled his fieldwork, including steel canes, Braille writers, child guides, native readers, and very extensive multi-site training in everything from language to horseback riding, all of which amount to an extraordinary personal and communal effort aimed at producing the conditions that would allow him to participate in this professional rite of passage. The project's occasion was a national health effort to fight a mosquito-borne blinding disease common in the area. The accommodations that enabled Gwaltney's fieldwork fit today's sense of what disability

(Gwaltney 1980) is founded on the idea that "core Black culture" is identified by collecting and culling verbal reports. He developed a methodology that made blindness a non-issue in the text. Under the terms of New ethnography, an accommodative methodology would have to be conceived quite differently.

In my interviewing technique, as I sat across the table from a number of stony-faced old medicine-men-become-pastors, I had been reading a book that instructed me to "probe" in the face of long silences (Spradley 1979); while the Navajos were reading from a book that said, "anyone who can't say what they mean the first time doesn't know what they're talking about, and anyone who won't give you time to think wants to hear themselves and not you." Since the 1970s, of course, anthropologists have learned to read the ethnographic interview as symptomatic of their own metacommunicative (in)competence (Briggs 1984), a problematic that is transformed but not averted by native ethnography. The work of tracing the epistemologies of various kinds of data, especially the ethnographer's body, became a responsibility. But for me, that would come later.

Perhaps most ethnographers remember the shock of recognizing at some moment that they've entered the research circuit and aren't just readers anymore. I was sitting in front of a Genu-ine Indian, an old man talking about his evangelical mission to save his own family (an entire clan...) from damnation. Not only had I arrived as an ethnographer, overcoming blindness, but I had immediately latched onto a classic topic conferring professional capital, which I would continue to need to combat disability discrimination. His speech, I would faithfully transcribe to capture the

accommodation involves. What Gwaltney calls "cultural accommodation to blindness" in the Mexican village is quite different: "The transgenerational link between the elderly onchocercous blind and child guides, the role of mendicancy in the maintenance of a sense of participation on the part of the blind, the ascription of ritual efficacy and public merit to deferential behavior toward blind persons, the obverse ascription of strong supernatural and social opprobrium to undeferential behavior toward them, and the absence of curative traits from indigenous medical technology and sorcery are indicative of an essentially accommodative adjustment to blindness" (Gwaltney 1970: v-vi). The contrast highlights a difference between an accommodation directed at self determination versus one geared to social incorporation at the lowest rung.

choppiness of the local accent—I secretly thought of the result as “cigar store Indian” talk, and fretted over whether this phonological accuracy on the page wasn’t at some level a misrepresentation of the naturalness of the sound of their talk in context. My tape recorder was whirring. An idiotic grin spread involuntarily across my face in the middle of whatever the pastor was saying. That was after the forgotten scene in which I had taken his elbow and I had instructed him how to lead me to his office, after which he awkwardly tried to verbalize where I should sit and anxiously kept reformulating his words, then ultimately taking hold of me until I was safely brought to rest. When I ran out of questions, The interview finally trailed off (the tape recorder’s batteries had already trailed off unnoticed). Maybe there were photos on the desk I could have asked about, or books on the shelves that would have led to greater rapport or insight (“Please describe all the objects in the room”). By retracing the path I remembered, I was able to leave independently, then take the familiar route home.

The acknowledgments section within a piece of writing is a way to portray oneself within a thick social network that juts in a different direction from the networks of the reader (Ben-Ari 1995 [1987])—part of the discourse of “I was there [and you weren’t].” More definitively, though, acknowledgments construct that network as being forged of exchanges and sometimes reciprocal bonds.¹⁵ The value of naming colleagues and friends is obvious. To the human data, on the other hand, the gesture reads “I give thanks back to you.” My fieldnotes record a process of my musing over the ethics of the research. I reasoned that our encounter was a two-way street, given that my quest for a grade and professionalization was matched by their sacred charge to spread the Word to anyone as missionaries. Whatever else I seemed to be, I as a listener—even if not as an author—represented an

¹⁵ In anthropological parlance, reciprocity is an exchange relation that is ongoing by virtue of (in Bourdieu’s understanding) the immediate perspective of game-play in which each new move is likely experienced as starting a new exchange rather than simply completing the old one. I will be using the idea of reciprocity in reference to an ongoing cycle of exchange that may nevertheless be inherently limited to a field or a period of time.

opportunity for doing so. Of course, it's just as likely that my being a student or my being blind were occasions for their pity. Navajo generosity was still another force I wasn't prepared to contemplate in our exchange. I wrote a gushing page of acknowledgements, like everyone else does, thanking David and the pastors and others who had sat through group or individual interviews, allowed me to sit in the back of Sunday school meetings, etc., etc. "I regret that I could not include a great deal more of what I learned from all of you who were kind enough to assist in my research." I also remember writing that I hoped the ethnography would be useful to them, but I must have been able to recognize the weakness of that statement, since it isn't in the final version. The acknowledgements are written in the format of a personal letter, but the page is included at the front of the copy submitted for the course. I slid their copy under the door of David's darkened office on my repentant but unconverted way to catch a bus out of town.

Knowledge "for its own sake" enacts precisely the formula by which any social institution in its ordinary mode plays upon the field established by its own rules and in so doing enthralls the players in a web of natural-feeling motivations.¹⁶ Academic anthropology, as opposed to applied projects, has a great deal of difficulty repaying the labor of the informant in its own coin. It pays them in cigarettes, hitched rides, money, NGO-related services, expert witnessing within the judicial system, and even vaccinations—although this last is sometimes discouraged because the responsibility makes the ethnographer liable for an unpredictable set of consequences. The pure research paradigm of most ethnographic projects, which intend simply to learn for the sake of "increasing our understanding," whatever its productive

¹⁶ Bourdieu is closely associated with this idea, which he terms "illusio." In one of his last discussions on the topic (Bourdieu 1998), he seems to back away slightly from a characteristic proscription against one's ability to be conscious of structuring structures, insofar as we can achieve a "disinterested" position within one game if (and only if) one joins a different game that intersects it. "If disinterestedness is sociologically possible, it can be so only through the encounter between habitus predisposed to disinterestedness and the universes in which disinterestedness is rewarded" (p. 88). I return to this idea of a perpendicular practice in later discussions of pedagogy.

value in the abstract or in the long term, does have a concrete political-economic life in the present. The ethnography extracts labor from informants and builds the anthropologist's career, but the ethnography in itself isn't likely to come with an explicit or even articulable program for how the representation will serve the group's needs. Hence, we sometimes pay informants, which I find an entirely honest practice; or ethnographers occasionally observe that natives are suspicious of their motives, which in fact is a step toward transparency; or we read the narratives of native generosity that ultimately embrace the ethnographer as fictive kin, which bothers me. I'm sure some sort of calculus could be developed to depict the native labor of cultural production against the work of its collection, processing, and the annual income and prestige garnered by the published dissertation as commodity. This is not a new thing to say (Clifford 1988, Rosaldo 1993 [1989], Bourdieu [everywhere]); but because it is never a natural thing to say, each practitioner either learns it by heart or doesn't.

By way of analogy, I am reminded of having been posed very often as an educational exhibit about blindness. These are known as "teaching moments" in the blindness discourse. To educate the public about "my condition" would benefit me, naturally, and so the role of prophet was instilled in me formally through special education classes and mobility instruction from the time I was six until the age when I learned to disrespect authority, a stage one can experience prior to reaching the age when the cost of doing so becomes so high. When I was about nine, my mobility instructor invited my vice principal to observe my skills, or perhaps hers. She threw a few coins onto the asphalt and had me demonstrate proper technique for groping in ever-widening concentric circles to systematically find the dropped items. "You mean he can't see that big old shiny quarter down there?" the principal asked. What very local economy gives value to the coin on the ground? The problem with such a display... well, one of the problems... is that of displacement, since the scene isn't a real problem of needing to recover dropped coins but is instead the representation or

simulation of such a problem; and the audience, just like the classes of school children I was asked to speak to, was not the same public that would be present at the actual event. Displacement holds the public in the suspension of being an unhelpful observer to, yet part of, the scene. The generalizeable knowledge is formed by abstracting me to the category of the blind and abstracting them to the category of the public, a two-fold displacement from the present. Whatever lesson they learn will be exercised elsewhere, not with me. They are reading an ethnography of the blind.

When I played author to the Navajo evangelists, my text's panoptic authority preempted my recognition or admission that I as a disabled ethnographer without field assistants or funding occupied a dependent position relative to my informants orders of magnitude greater than the norm. Not only was I entirely dependent on them for transportation to the Reservation, but I required sight assistance to learn the layouts of buildings or to move from one person to the next. I paid no one, but also spent their time in small ways that I myself took for granted, because these chores fall into the daily round of unacknowledged favors I have to ask of people if I want access to what is going on in an unfamiliar place—to find a door, a seat, a bathroom, a bus. By doing the work of accommodating my vision and mobility, my informants were supporting my ability to reinterpret their conversion narratives in a way that went against their own literalist interpretive framework. These interactions are not part of the ethnographic model. The ethnographer is a participant, a child, fictive kin, a suspicious agent, but is an agent nevertheless over and against whatever the natives do. Consequently, I failed to conceptualize my dependence as part of the sociology of scientific knowledge in which I was active: one scene, but two discourses to produce ideologically segregated experiences of myself. My self the ethnographer was, in fact, meant to be the professional cure for my quotidian disabled self, and so the ethnographic text erased disability. Ultimately, though, the discourses I inherited about what the ethnographer is, who the informants are, and how we can explain to ourselves what we are

doing all failed to cover me. They were never calibrated to cover the peculiar kind of social relations I encounter during fieldwork. what was absent from the written ethnography exerted a pressure, such that the politics of fieldwork became more than a special topic for me. I haven't gone back to Navajoland.

But neither has it left me. That experience of my own particularistic condition of fieldwork, as an unbalanced reciprocity in which I both possessed the means of production and was invariably left in debt, would become productive years later. I now can't help but juxtapose the labor of gratitude, enacted in such things as written acknowledgments, to that same labor as I perform it each time a friend or stranger does something for me to make up for my disability. So much easier to hire everything done. What have I done when I offer a friend money as I get out of his car? What has he done in accepting it? What has he done by never asking for or indeed accepting any other labor from me but my thanks, or by failing to recognize something I later do as being "in return", or failing to value it? "Bumming" a ride is a normal scene which can be played in isolation without invoking disability, because it is a scene anyone might play from time to time. However, it carries with it the long-term expectation of reciprocity. The labor of gratitude is hard labor, especially when it becomes constitutive of one's way of life and a precondition of basic forms of participation or even subsistence.

The informal logic of practice that makes economic reciprocity possible is reproduced at any analytical level of social life we care to observe.¹⁷ In the flow of a local interaction, however, there is little room for a structural matrix in which a set of gestures, words, implications, and other elements of interpersonally coordinated action can be reevaluated and substituted. The

¹⁷ Tall talk, but this claim is central to the theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977 [1972], 1990a), which tends to observe institutional contexts; as well as to a long tradition of philosophical and linguistic mutuality (Mead 1934, Garfinkel 1967, Rommitveit 1998, Wilce 2004), not to mention person deixis, although I just did (Hanks 1992). The language system provides the framework in which semiotic contrasts can be evaluated and communicated, while discourse shapes and constitutes the language system in practice. See Chapter 2 for additional discussion.

evaluation of me hangs. The moment I become an interactive presence in a public social field—which includes my being visually scanned—the dynamics of the field itself shift to the extent that I am recognized as being non-exchangeable with the class of “normal” actors who might stand in my place. In fact, the shift itself is the practical constitution of what “abnormal” means in a given situation. People might become more self conscious, anxious, solicitous, judgmental, fascinated, etc., but the general awareness that I represent a new and unpredictable factor in the social field exerts an influence that wafts across the setting. This shift in the atmosphere extends from me at all times and moves with me, so that I do not experience it as a shift at all. The sphere expands in direct proportion to the freedom of mobility granted by the social field to a standard actor, the mobilized status of the participant-observer being an extreme example. It shrinks in proportion to my ability to develop stable strategies for navigating that field as a consequence of my having already developed a mutual acquaintance with it and it to me.

In the daily round, we who are disabled may feel the impact of suspended evaluations or frank devaluations, which are continually being repeated, as any sort of affect: a surge that will become anger, a depression that will become withdrawal, an awkwardness that will become a self-effacing joke, a sense of inevitability that will become an assumption of one’s due or one’s debasement. Affects become entrenched as these things as they are incorporated as signs read by social practice. In the absence of a structural understanding of communicative exchange and reciprocity, however, there’s no guarantee (or even likelihood, based on my life-long observations of disabled friends and strangers) that the impact will be attributed to an inherent relational structure of the constituted field. Instead, the unreciprocal relationship is so much part of the ambience that one can become inured to it, except sometimes as affect. One can also end up restructuring one’s life so as to avoid the activities in which dependency becomes not worth the price of a shit-eating grin. Above all, the magic of

forgetting was, in my life, responsible for the “out-going” attitude for which I was rewarded. “You don’t let being blind stop you from doing anything,” although it always stopped me from choosing how to be involved and also it stopped me from realistically imagining what my actual involvement would be like. In Steve Martin’s comedy sketch “The Death of Socrates,” Socrates turns to his students and says, “I drank... what?”

By the time I began thesis fieldwork in 1997, I had turned to ethnomusicology and verbal art as areas where the natives and I shared both an interest in and framework for taking their work apart, as well as for evangelizing it. I had also learned to work in the New Ethnography, although the situations I described remained largely atmospheric while the analysis mapped out the participatory frameworks of various “ethnic” musical genres based on my listening to recordings I made. I wanted to track the “phatic” social-relational function of ensemble performance as it communicated embodied self awarenesses that were coded as experiences of cultural difference. The 1998 text alternates among theoretical exposition, a very few first-person narratives, and Geertzian aerial perspectives on places and practices presumed, I would think, to have come from direct observation rather than culled reports. What amazes me in rereading my writing from that period is how descriptions of specific events can at once erase their experiential origins and yet actively give the impression of displaying them.

[1] As I sit squeezed into the circle of twenty musicians at Fado's, I hear behind me someone quietly picking out each melody on a guitar. [2] Meanwhile, fiddle player Eila Ross of the band Crazy Jane and the Bishop uses eye contact and head movements while she plays in order to encourage a less experienced player to adopt a more active role in the fast, ornately-decorated melody. The shy younger fiddle player signals her reluctance by averting her eyes and continues to play only occasional melodic phrases. [3] At another point, a bagpipe player wordlessly shows a jig melody to a flute player by allowing him to watch a few hurried runs through the tune. [4] At no time are musical scores or verbal descriptions of songs presented. Participation in a given song relies on having it in one's repertoire. [5] Mention is made at one point of a song

book someone recently bought, [6] and musicians do use scores to expand their repertoires alongside recorded music. But the competence to perform accrues in real time, as the guitarist in the shadows behind me and the shy fiddle player attest. [7] The performance does not halt, and so players learn to participate in the group not by practicing each part of a song, but through gradually admitting themselves into the ongoing performance context over the course of several sessions during which the song is played.

Teasing apart the above passage, an embodied experience (1) immediately becomes a set of visual observations (2) and interpretations as to what they're doing—made, as it happens, by a field assistant who I thank in an endnote. That the first narrated detail is aural and embodied seems important for inaugurating a non-problematic reading of the whole scene. Next (3), something audible is given interactional meaning by visual data, and (4) is significant, but stated so broadly that it seems to be drawn from not only immediate visual evidence, which at least this time I would have asked for specifically, but also a deductive quality implying deeper knowledge of the form of these interactions. The next sentence contains this same shift in aspect, from the present interaction (5) to the ethnographic present (6), which is then grounded with reference to one audible and one visual event. (7) begins ambiguously, either referencing the present interaction or the ethnographic present, then becomes clearly generalized, both in time and with respect to how the ethnographer (that's me) knows. We can continue to trace this trajectory in the way it would next offer a theoretical gloss lashed to this raft of field experiences. This technique mirrors the much-critiqued writing—style? Methodology?—of Geertz, a native point of view with no natives' points of view in it. I do include dialogue occasionally, and, again, its insertion casts the remarkable aura of embodiment over surrounding collapsed, synoptic descriptions of context.

To my knowledge, the human brain cannot engage with the idea of spatial relationships, such as being presented with the verbal description of a

scene, without visualizing it.¹⁸ The writing technique here exploits a passive mode of reading that, having accomplished a flowing visualization of the scene, finds no occasion to distrust the ethnographer.¹⁹ In effect, “I saw” remains a presupposed but absented component of descriptive sentences, a fact which ultimately has consequences for generating disabling encounters further down the road, when the trick can’t be performed consistently. Neither would or probably could I have contrived the text so strategically. In all these respects, moreover, my own habit of visualizing narrative action transpires in just this way as I read my own texts.

My authorship and therefore my authority and a degree of liability belong in part to others, although I wrote the text alone. The theory-mongering form of writing toward which I gravitate so strongly is a much simpler matter of reporting on what I have experienced while in an author’s verbal world. It’s a fine, truthful story, but it asks to be read as an accurate representation and I am frustrated by the lack of any means to assess it on these grounds. Nowhere in the thesis do I mention blindness, in fact, which is often the only way to be taken seriously in the first place when the text is judged according to standards tied to one’s deep participation and access.

I am on the edge of A community center dance floor crowded with folk dancers. A statuesque blonde, red dress incongruously formal, is lilting rapturously about the fine art of ballroom dancing when the band starts an East European circle dance and she is off. I step back and fiddle with my cassette recorder. I am well aware in the moment that this is where I as a good ethnographer am supposed to jump in with both left feet. My reluctance has less to do with the fact that I have a documented allergy to all geometric forms of dance (circle, line, square) than with my realistic calculation regarding what my learning the dance would require. I don’t

¹⁸ Chapter 5 discusses the possibility that some congenitally blind people may visualize as well; but in any event, a blind reviewer, so to speak, who does not constantly visualize as I do might be the most prone to notice the epistemological layering in the passage quoted.

¹⁹ Compare Tedlock (1983 [1972]), who discusses various oral and embodied techniques of verisimilitude that connote realism to stories in performance.

want to get sucked in by someone who assumes that teaching a dance will be easy because it's physical. What my teacher would discover is that it will require a painstakingly unfamiliar linguistic effort. The collective event would stagger to a halt if my instruction were forced on me in the flow of the interaction instead of at some remove. A group dancer only knows by looking at others how to repair a forgotten step or how his body's movements are being collectively mirrored, which I would think must be a primary source of enjoyment of folk dancing. So long as my attention centers on taking very underspecified verbal commands and isolated body movements and turning them into something like a fluid body practice (the poetic sense of which I tend still not to apprehend), my embodiment of the dance would for a very long time not have much to do with the native point of view. I see myself as I would appear, incompetent but supported because I am a blind man struggling to participate at any level. The appearance of incompetence derives from the field and from what I perceive as others' metacommunicative incompetence, but it won't be seen that way. It would have its own lasting consequences for my relationships with any of them, as well as my relationship with myself. As the dancers go around, I am suddenly reminded of all those school days on the gym sidelines, straining to track the ball by sound so as not to get hit in the nose. Growing up during the 1980s, my three great fears were basketball, nuclear war, and group dance corvée. Choose your battles but never play anyone's fool. Naturally, folk dancing is hardly what I am really talking about here.

When the dance ends, the massive participatory framework in front of me dissolves into a pebbled wall of white noise. I seem to be in an unpopulated eddy, so I try to distinguish a familiar voice or topic of conversation to which I can attach myself. The field is underpopulated in terms of items of interest. My "key informant," who has brought me here, returns to me and tells me that there is a well-known local musician I should meet. I take her elbow and she leads me to him. He's been recording the band, because songs are made to be recorded and learned. Our

conversation ends when he runs off to catch the next one. I begin scanning again to find something to move toward. My challenge is to hear, identify, navigate toward, and then interrupt the flow of others who have either taken my isolation to be a matter of my own choice, or who have not noticed me because what I am doing does not register on their map of desirable or immediately relevant activity choices.

There is nothing remarkable in my discomfort. It is always present when I'm "independent" in a mutable environment, unless I simply cease to think of myself as being in relation to the context, which I find myself doing more and more often. Neither is there anything remarkable in my not presenting these kinds of details in my ethnographic account, since I have learned not to consider them at all in conventional conversations in which they would be taken as an uncomfortable change of topic. Because this conditional mode of limited participation is endemic to my life, it doesn't occur to me to qualify it as a constituent of how I specifically move through the ethnographic field. Ethnographic narrative conventions therefore met with little resistance in erasing my radicality. I consider it now only because I am studying the disabled ethnographer, his behaviors sans all the prostheses by which he actually accomplishes his objectives. I can characterize his overall pattern of movement as follows: there is virtually no extra-discursive flow within a particular field or from one social field to the next, and rarely anything that acts as the impulse for him to set out across the floor toward the next object of ethnographic desire. His flow hinges upon language, reliable structure, and an intentionality that inaugurates actions according to an abstract agenda frequently disjoined from the present context, such as a plan he brings with him or something he invents to say or do that will reconnect him with the participatory framework.

But I'm not aware of any of this in 1997. All I tend to do is wonder where all the data is and how to get myself there, even though every time I arrive the anticipatory image I had of myself remains elsewhere. Soon after I set myself to realizing my disability, I became able to formulate it as a loss

of improvisation, spontaneity, and independence. All three of these forms of agency fluctuate with the present field of action and are comparatively “enabled” when I occupy that field in company with one of my familiars, to a depth I doubt they can imagine. As a result, the transition from a biomedical understanding of blindness as a visual condition to the beginnings of a social model of disability (Oliver 1990, 1996) seems never to be a natural step. Later, I would trace the three factors to one.

I did most of my research in “public houses” for that project. The microphone and headphones, especially in a town like Austin, fixed me in an identity stronger than blindness. A pub is richly sedimented with things and people to look at, just as in a coffee shop or on a bus there’s always a newspaper with which to control one’s hands and eyes. Normal public sociality requires that the eyes, at least, be occupied, although the etiquette varies as to whether or not eyes can be closed, if listening to music qualifies as occupation, etc. The bar is structured to provide a variety of organizational frameworks of interaction and selective interactional bypassing. As in most public places, however, what to do with my hands and gaze becomes a real problem when I am not directly engaged. Empty space is not a viable object of one’s gaze, and print-reading can be explained as much in terms of occupying the hands as the eyes. If I look uneasy about my bodily suspension, I am judged socially awkward; if I am at peace with it, I am aloof. Either of these interpretations is based on the assumption that I have the same choices of engagement and self presentation as anyone in the public. A better gloss is that I have been misplaced.

The immense privileged status of being able to apprehend the constructedness of one’s own agency only as a condition of being free to choose is sewn deep in the fabric of consumer society in general and American graduate studenthood in particular, where narrative markers of agentive experience constitute the conversational, relational capital. Happy hour with young anthropologists: the talk always returns to their connoisseurship of foreign places. Travel is simply what an anthropologist

does with her disposable money and time, well beyond any idea of fieldwork but perhaps as a global landscape on which the desire for ethnographic fieldwork sometimes forms—an experience of oneself in difference, the unpackaged tour, alive, re-created, liminoidal, rewarding. “My mind was able to escape from the claustrophobic, Turkish-bath atmosphere in which it was being imprisoned by the practise of philosophical reflection. Once it had got out into the open air, it felt refreshed and renewed. Like a city-dweller transported to the mountains, I became drunk with space, while my dazzled eyes measured the wealth and variety of the objects surrounding me” (Levi-Strauss 1997 [1955]: 56).

Insofar as ethnographic fieldwork becomes professional capital traded on the basis of the speciality and quality of field experiences, anthropology remains likewise disposed to take for granted the force of desire active in its professional culture. Because the ethnographer’s kinship obligations are fictive in the sense of being temporally and consequentially bounded by the game being played, the ethnographer is free to interrogate the game and, ultimately, to opt out of it. To the extent that her livelihood doesn’t depend on native forms of labor, she is free to slide from the role of worker to that of observer to that of VIP, from female worker to male worker roles, etc. Whatever constraints the society imposes on the ethnographer, fieldwork depends on her being unusually mobile, since otherwise she would have precisely a native point of view and might not be economically or politically able to enter or exit the field.

Participant-observation has virtually always been described in terms of an ethnographer traveling across a cultural border zone of some kind and entering into a new sphere of relations. Rosaldo (1993 [1989]) has noted the transparency of the Western episteme in the constitution of this cultural exchange, but it should also be noted that participant-observation creates a social organization in which the fieldworker is entirely engaged, entirely constitutive. Institutionalized desires for information, inclusion, knowledge, understanding, data, and professional recognition coat every surface of the

field. Ethnographic desires give texture to culture. The objects of this desiring perception might end up on the anthropologist's walls back home, become field relationships, or form the basis of a practical activity through which she comes to an embodied understanding, but in all events participant-observation is founded on the ability to forge a relationship among the ethnographer, a ground, and the object of desire. The ground is the set of structures, the solidity of which can be taken for granted as the precondition of mobility, the ability to move toward the desired object of fieldwork, in precisely the same procedure that allows participants in a verbal exchange to identify and move toward their object insofar as they can take the organizational framework of talk largely for granted. In the absence of very local forms of field-activated, flow-generating agency such as eye contact, recognized status as a person, a built environment engineered to the specifications of the ethnographer's body, or the ability to survey a field overflowing with potential items of interest, the ground crumbles and attention shifts from items of "intellectual interest" to the problematics of one's own participation in organizational structures, exposing the privileged construction of "intellectual interests" in the process. Certainly in my case, the social organization of participant-observation materialized in stark relief by virtue of the disorganizing force of disability, which popped all the seams. "In most fields of social action there are alternative courses open, and there must be selection between them if social life is to be carried on. Such decision-taking has social repercussions-social relations are created or modified and adjusted as a result of the choices made. This continual ordering and reordering of social relations is the process of organization. Even where no choice seems to be involved, but only impulsive action, the consequential adjustments in the activities of others mean social organization. . . The preferences in social relations, their worthwhileness, the standards of judgment applied, give a content and meaning to social action. This is the field for the study of values" (Firth 1953). My center of critical attention has become the many forms of standardized (and thereby

exchangeable) values, seldom recognized as such, by which the people around me circulate their labor, experiences, and roles. For anthropologists, mobility near tops the list.

I still occupy the apartment I would come home to while I was conducting my Master's thesis fieldwork. The places I visited then have continued to occasionally recall and reinterpret my memories of that time, so that a later rereading of the 1998 text was vexed. When I sat down to write my next conference paper (I'd traded in ethnomusicology for a project at an outdoor museum), I was determined to ground the narrative epistemologically, which is to say unconventionally. I was determined to excoriate the artificiality from my narratives and tell embodied stories. And now we come to it, because I found myself unable to write such a narrative, either as anthropology or fiction. Given the state of my vision in 1995, much less 1998, I could not physically have perceived many of the visual details or observed some of the activities I describe in the Navajo story that begins this essay, except to a degree that is much more imaginative than the transparent norm. They are mirages and must invariably have been constructed from a combination of (1) hearsay taken from various indirect or direct references over time; (2) a longitudinal accumulation of vague visual impressions, each highly revocable but which accrue a functional reliability over time as a working image; and (3) assorted stuff my mind made up and presented to me, since a man with no face will always be more difficult to remember than a man with an imaginary face. As a critical exercise, I can differentiate elements of an experience narrative that probably arise from any of these three sources, but when I attempt to re-imagine the story without the rhetoric of images already constituted by these procedures, I simply cannot do so. "What can you see?" I open my mouth to reply, but what comes out are objects, not blind spots, while it should go without saying that my memory at best presents the objects I saw and so comes back to me within the same loop but now with the holistic character of dream knowledge. "What does the fuzziness look like?" My eyes immediately begin

looking for the outline of fuzziness. In 2000, I gained a sense of how I could “accurately” communicate the practical reality of partial blindness, which would be as an optical illusion—a Rorschach world in which contextual cues alone would finalize the image and yet one sometimes in the end is left with no basis for distinguishing between dappled sunlight on water, the jagged floor of a canyon far below, or broken ground inches away. For years, I’ve intended to show such a scene rather than just tell about it, but now my vision has deteriorated and I can’t reproduce such an image based on a memory of what sight was like, except as the kind of speculative fiction anyone can write if they try. My earliest inklings of this essay collection, often first worked out in my reading notes, evidence a dawning realization that my blindness was only incidentally a matter of vision; blindness was instead what I could only call a sort of language disorder.

I am strongly disposed to divide my experience into two parts: the accident of my blindness, which I work to control for and cancel out of my image of the second part, which is the idea I have of the scene in its normativity. “Me, not me”: there is nothing unique about how I as a blind person turn myself into an observer, but the result for a blind person is markedly unproductive because the observer perspective as a storage medium cannot without skilled phenomenological effort be transposed back into the embodied field perspective except as a normative embodiment. This “cancelling-out” procedure demonstrably works on two levels. The first is the set of strategies for achieving social incorporation despite a radical difference, while the second involves a consistent and coherent cover story that fosters a self transposable with the kind of social actor anticipated by the social field; that is, I try to find in myself the qualities accorded to my role, which I have been enculturated to recognize, and then I act in a fashion that will meet the standards of this position in order to successfully navigate the field (Biddle [2002] has likewise written of identification in this way). The self constructed within this procedure only tends to recapture and recontextualize the elements already made available by the rhetorics

responsible for my perception. Hence, blindness tends to disappear from my past, present, and projection of the future, except in certain gross categorical ways.

If the cover story were transparent, I would be able to inwardly recognize the dimensions of difference that are at odds with or passed over by the manner in which I am called upon to act. In short, I would be “just acting,” a self-conscious subject of oppression. But someone who “acts out” their ordinary existence at all times, public and private, tends to receive any number of psychiatric labels and, more importantly, has difficulty engaging in productive activity. The more likely scenario is that we tend to be aware of ourselves in ways that are conditioned by social practice (Goffman 1959, Bourdieu 1990a, Foucault, Whorf, etc.). The perdurant nature of the troubles I’ve had, along with their echoes in the oral and written accounts of other disabled people (see Chapter 5), make a case for suggesting that the awareness of radical difference is not only unexpressed, but unavailable and, within the framework of the most immediate game-play, unproductive. Anthropologists always seem to write about the “constraints” of the social field, as if actors were bound-up balls of freedom waiting to explode—the celebrated will to power. The model begs the question of how these qualities or intensions come into being in the first place, if not through their social production. Self knowledge comes from the field of practice, or else we would have to lay a good deal of culture alongside species instinct. Consequently, a distinction can be made between self knowledge that is “repressed” by a hegemonic social field versus “dissociated” qualities of one’s situation that never become adequately formulated as part of a discourse or habit (Kirmayer 1994, Stern 1997).

Memory turns out to be already inscribed by a communicable version of a scene, which is to say a normative-literal record of relationships and features that will pass in public discourse. As I interact with my environment, the habits of turning my gaze to an object, taking it in hand, and calling it to mind all bring a visual image; and only with considerable

effort, even after recent years of practice, can I “unsee” it. When my vision was better, I didn’t have this problem to a noticeable degree, and of course most humans seldom notice it at all. Now, though, I am apt to turn off a lamp and the room fails to go dark until I remember to mentally turn the lamp off as well. At some level, I am sure that this form of forgetting, which is a forgetting of production, is what provides the ground of my self awareness and my ability to act. Nietzsche wrote something about this forgetting being the only thing that stops interpretation from sliding all the way down.

By way of analogy, analytical procedures of data collection such as mechanical recording or fieldnotes limit the creative license of one’s much-later acts of remembering. By recording comparatively thin events before they are framed within the arc of a theoretical presentation, fieldnotes also maximize the transposability of one’s observations to other observers and thereby form a building block of scientific reliability. They have this property, regardless of one’s theoretical predilections. Wilce (1998) notes that real-time note-taking withdraws one from the flow of interactions, which will have another kind of limiting effect on what one takes notes on; while his preferred method of taking notes as soon as possible post-facto inevitably introduces a limitation on accuracy and the degree of verbatim print recording one can do. Jean Jackson (1990, 1995) has interviewed anthropologists about fieldnotes, and the results overwhelmingly indicate that one important dimension of these fetishized objects and the practice of creating them is the presence of the institution of anthropology standing over the shoulder of the scribbling fieldworker. At this most immediate moment, the inscription is already consciously bestowing professional identity on the ethnographer, providing the scene of writing its *raison d’être*. Finally, Lederman (1990) documents how her own process of reading her fieldnotes recontextualizes them in the process of drawing them into a narrative told at a great distance from the field and amidst a climate of theoretical order. As argued by Clifford (1990: 57), ethnographic inscription, transcription, and

ultimately description are all "intertextual, figurative, and historical all the way down to the most 'immediate' perceptions." As memory-writings, fieldnotes put a stop to that as a practical matter, a matter of forgetting.

When I make any record of research, I confront a quandary. If I take on the task of producing an objectively accurate account, I am forced to apply a sort of second-guess skeptical procedure that moves a step away from experience, in which case I am no longer documenting the pertinent conditions under which I interacted with my environment. I'm taking a strange step back to ask "now wait, what would this experience have been fashioned from, really?" That procedure would require an objective foundationalist instrument to apply to my visually-colonized imagination, and so the effort to recover the objective world would send the first-person account further into experience-distant territory. On the other hand, if I approach experience phenomenologically, I know myself to be writing a sort of fiction, in the sense that details are produced through a synthetic procedure that is not the same as it is for a sighted person, and so the written culture is not reliable, vis-à-vis someone standing beside me. Of the two options, however, only the second is valid, because it exhibits its epistemology on the page where unreliability can at least be tracked, if that is someone's goal; or where the Rorschach dynamics of my meaning-making are open for me and everyone else to critique as cultural product. And, of course, the use of myself as an extraordinary example is only intended to present a magnification of what goes on fundamentally in ethnographic writing. Fieldwork creates the ethnographer, who creates the text, which creates new knowledge. However, the process is also recursive at every stage; experience creates oneself as the subject who understands as a process of signification embedded in a methodological field (habits, disciplinary discourses, ethnomethodologies, rhetorical tropes, interests), and the perceptual datum of experience is constructed from this process.²⁰ This

²⁰ Compare the representative assertion by Marx that "The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present" (Tucker 1978: 4).

latter statement characterizes the ordinary constitution of self awareness from which ethnography extends as a formal art of everyday life.

The process of my professionalization is thus a complex one, as it turns out. In trying to practice the art of everyday life, I came to recognize the dimensions of my difference—the difference between me and the person the discipline anticipated through its procedures, and also my difference from the person anticipated by the natives with their habituated communicative practices. Without something extraordinary thrown into the works, these ruptures are never resolved and never enter me into a deeper layer of public participation, as the legend of the ethnographer would have it. Yet my disincorporation is certainly providing me a productive commentary on practice. In a philosophical sense, interpretive ethnography is the surface on which our ruptures of mutual understanding are recorded. Even responses like native ethnography still rely on graphocentric procedures to construct collectivized self and other as disjunct objects; while autoethnography, which has varied definitions (Reed 1997, Bochner and Ellis 2002), always returns to the self's outlook on an ethnos. I am fixated on ethnography as an object of fascination for this reason. My life, my reading, and my conversations with other disabled people prompt me to argue that I came to know my disability for the first time only as a disabled ethnographer. I was able to cobble together a sociological explanation of my ordinary experience only by first reading it on the surface of ethnographies, once that surface had a texture decomposed by reflexivity.

There are three pivotal characters in the opening story: David and I are present, while Coyote is absent. In reality, everywhere one looks there is nothing but coyotes. And so it was that I came into this place made of fabulous texts. Barring an absolute refutation of Wittgenstein's explosive idea of meaning, Derrida's of writing, Althusser's of ideology, or Foucault's of knowledge, we can all be said to live here, in theory. It's a claim that many in anthropology today find extraneous, because past discussions of textuality

have been abstract and, ultimately, of little use “on the ground.” In my life, however, these ideas take on special urgency.

SELF-ANALYTICS: REFLEXIVITY AND REFLEXIVE TRADITIONS

I want to take a turn beating a long-dead horse and, worse, I am doing so to get it back on its feet. The literature on anthropological reflexivity can be divided into three areas, each of which momentarily became prominent lines of discussion within anthropology during the 1980s: the power structure of ethnographic interviewing and fieldwork itself, which fits under the heading of the sociology of scientific knowledge; the rhetorical strategies of the texts, as part of a pan-academic, post-objectivist rediscovery that the sciences are written; and a related Rationalist examination of argumentation and the status of empirical truth claims, which belongs to the philosophy of science. Comments made by Watson (1991: 85-6) accurately foreshadowed what would be the result of all the 1980s rattle over experimental forms of ethnographic writing: “I imagine that only a small minority of readers who are urgently interested in matters epistemological are likely to persist with them; the rest, once the novelty has worn off, will drift back to more familiar forms of writing. In New Literary Forms we can see the future of interpretive anthropology, and it does not work.” Doesn’t work for whom and to what ends? Practically speaking, it seems inevitable that any interpretive project will ground its deconstructive efforts in a world that remains otherwise conceptually solid, and so Watson’s prediction has proven prescient for mainstream ethnographic practice. The revolution in experimental writing failed to materialize (because, after all, reflexivity cannot be taught objectively as a method). The scientists were unmoved, while another contingent listened for a while before apparently deciding that, even if the world were semiotically unstable, there’s apparently nothing to be done about it and so one should just duck and plug away at the

routinized post-Geertzian methodical residue of those discussions of “things epistemological.”

Both strategies can be valid, depending on how the text is to circulate. Realism will remain the approach of applied anthropology, for example, and for political advocacy and the documentation of communicative practices. Between the resolutely scientific versus postmodern modes of inquiry, we also find a large corpus of ethnographies that don’t declare a strong allegiance to a particular epistemology regarding their own inquiry, and so they are caught trying to finesse their way between full-bore hermeneutics and social science in order to be recognized. Usually this takes place as part of a tacit professional socialization that includes certain features of a linguistic ideology of academic discourse. For example, I went through a period in which certain phrases and especially titles rang the bell of cultural capital, without my understanding quite why except in terms of their iconicities to other valued expressions. We find an abundance of New ethnography titles that combine an artistic figure of speech, often marking cultural dialogicality by way of an appropriated decontextualized bit of native speech (“I’m In Stitches’: Selfhood and hegemony among Easter Island doily-weavers”) or a pair of something akin to conceptually dizzying gerunds (“Shrunk Heads, Expanding Minds: Post-hegemonic cannibalism among Easter Island psychoanalysts”); combined with subtitles that denote the real-world object of study, following a variant of the form [practice] + [people] + [place]. Given that ethnographers tend to be among the very best writers in Academe, the endurance of these extraordinarily hackneyed tropes should be read in terms of their social rather than their erstwhile poetic function. The titles index an ethnography that is intertextual “all the way down” to its fixed, reliably-observable object, such that interpretivism is subordinated to realist science for the purpose, usually, of upholding Academe’s dominant standards of value. This double-voicedness is a characteristic of speech genres, and not just anthropology (Bakhtin 1986 [1953]). A quick survey of several academic presses (contradicted by a survey of several recent journal

issues) suggests that this hybrid form is giving way to a new breed of titles that instead head discussions of ethnographically-observed processes, so the “radical” dialogical and feminist work of the 1990s may be coming to center stage after all. What I want to suggest, however, is that the 1980s hoopla over the nature of [the] ethnography can be attributed to a contest over an ideologically unitary, objective referent of the word “ethnography.” In other words, both the book and the figure of its author were, for the purposes of the discussion, taken out of their many different courses of circulation. Ethnographies were all constructs, but somehow the category to which they belonged remained reified. In the wake of these debates, Reflexivity became something talked about far too little, too loosely, and too superficially.

Meyerhoff and Ruby (Ruby 1982) distinguish between self reference, which is a modern Western preoccupation with the privatized self, particularly the outward expressions of its presumed interiority; versus the metacommunicative expression of the self in its social relations, which in effect holds presuppositions of interiority in abeyance for the purpose of rethinking that relationship and its parts. They suggest that reflexivity requires not one mirror but two, so that the construction of images is seen as an infinite regress. “Narcissus’ tragedy then is that he is not narcissistic enough, or rather that he does not reflect long enough to effect a transformation. He is reflective, but he is not reflexive—that is, he is conscious of himself as an other, but he is not conscious of being self-conscious of himself as an other and hence not able to detach himself from, understand, survive, or even laugh at this initial experience of alienation” (p. 3).²¹ For example, when the camera backs away from Dustin Hoffman’s embodiment of Willy Loman in Volker Schlöndorff’s 1985 *Death of a Salesman*, it keeps backing until we see the footlights, the microphones, and

²¹ The image sharply evokes Hegel’s dialectic of recognition. However, reflexivity here is a process of differentiating the self from itself rather than coming to reflexive consciousness of itself by way of the mirror of the other as in Hegel or, in fact, a Ricoeurian interpretive ethnography. Thus the mathematical axiom of reflexivity “ $a=a$ ” becomes subject to a deconstruction, in which antecedent variables are recovered, instead of representing the unified end of a proof.

all the other edges of the play world within the play within the movie within (arguably) the Raeganomics world order. It's a broad canvas on which we can now theorize as critics about how elements are pointing to one another or to even broader contexts and discourses. This analytical stance toward the self, whether an informant's self or the ethnographer's, applies equally to both cases by virtue of its being a method of reading a text, and not a sensitivity to embodied experience—although experience obviously has to be where it starts.

Far from being a self-referencing claim to an interior and thus inviolable truth, reflexivity is a form of deconstructive textual criticism, a fundamental process of human understanding employed by but separable from both philosophical and practical introspection.²² It produces expressions and interprets the conditions under which they are constructed, this work often occurring on the printed page, and we really must keep in mind this image of reflexivity as building up from experience rather than unearthing it in some essentialistic way. Subjective experience becomes subject to interpretation only as a textual report, and not as an experience; hence, Freud worked from dream texts, not dreams; Geertz interpreted what Balinese observably did, which can include the act of speaking their minds; and introspecting Philosophers read arguments, not minds. Boyd (1983) notes that even as this linguistic-deconstructive moment in critical theory was opening, it was closing within the novelistic tradition figured in Joyce and Faulkner, for whom reflexivity was the basis for the production of novelistic experience (my own interest in interpretation, several academic disciplines ago, stems directly from reading Faulkner and Dostoyevsky). Boyd's

²² See Lee (1997: 90ff) for a roughly parallel but very technical discussion of the semiotics of self-reference, as the qualification of an object; versus self-reflexivity, in which the object becomes interpretable only on the basis of its indexical relations to the contexts of its production, such as deixis or the signaling of its token-source reference. Reflexive utterances are deeply implicated in performativity in that this forging of complex co-textual, inter-contextual bonds creates the context it appears to simply describe. Hence, first-person accounts of experience are rather complex performative discourse productions. This summoning of meta-communicative attention defines self-analytics, in distinction from psychoanalysis, according to the premise that "the reality of the inner psyche is the same reality as that of the sign" (Volosinov 1973 [1930]: 26).

observation makes sense from the standpoint that the capitalist knowledge economy that courses among writers, publishing houses, critics, consumers, and Universities must continually move onto new ground as the precondition of its livelihood, so that the identification of reflexivity as a paradigm already marked it for death. Today, there are many literary critics and anthropologists alike who celebrate the passing of deconstruction (and reflexivity along with it). In what follows, I review a few of the influential sticking points that seem now to endure as reflexivity's traditionalizations, quite apart from its analytical formulation. I feel a need to reclaim reflexivity from the histories of its reception so that it can be put back into service as a heuristic tool, both for remediating the ethnographer's own involvement in the field, which has been the subject of this chapter; and for limbering up theoretical understandings of what one is observing, whether or not "I" remains the subject, as taken up in the next chapter.

First, the paradigm is self-critical, so I can dispense with perhaps the most casual reference to ethnographic reflexivity as a thickly-laid-on self-referencing elaboration of the ethnographer's thoughts and feelings. That is a literary technique, not a method, and so it needs to be evaluated in terms of what the author is doing with the technique rather than itself serving as the basis for evaluating the text as "very reflexive" as if that tells us what it is doing. The ethnographer's autobiography, understood as a factual recall of the significant past, has sometimes been introduced in order to explain the ethnographer's situated understanding in the field (cf. most of the essays in Okely and Callaway 1992), a technique that demonstrably contributes wonderful depth and breadth to the ethnographic field but which nevertheless does nothing to change the ontological grounding of the ethnographic account, which is no more "veridical," if that's the idea, than if the field experiences were presented in isolation. Autobiographical claims do not alleviate the responsibility of the reader (or the writer as his own critic) to understand the text constitutively as a complex site of discourse.

Thwacking our proverbial dead horse in a sensitive spot, I would note that *Translated Woman* (Behar 1993) often provoked strong negative reactions toward reflexivity as a result of a very valid reading in which Behar uses the last chapters to interpretively as well as textually close her subject's story with her own, seeming to insist on her reading of Esperanza's story as final. Behar's is a highly motivated reading, and by her account a motivated writing:

From the first time I heard Esperanza tell her story, I thought of her as a woman warrior. I was attracted to the image of the tough woman who had struggled to define herself in opposition to the way society would define her. But I was also repelled by, and more than a little afraid of, the woman who had tried to advance her female cause by appropriating characteristics culturally ascribed to men, even to the point of beating her own daughter and women rivals. Although I could render her attitudes and actions intelligible, how far could I go in celebrating them as models of feminist resistance and agency? (p. 294).

The fourth part of the book, "Reflejos / Reflections," intends to problematize the parallels between translation of a story from its context of production to that of consumption, attending to Behar's mobility and control over the means of production, but claiming for herself the status of a "literary wetback" (p. 329) and certainly never surrendering feminism as an authorially-imposed interpretant transcending both their stories. "The violence directed at me was psychic, not inscribed on my body, as it was for Esperanza, and, given my class position, I was properly fed in the midst of my sufferings. But the pain was nonetheless profound; its thick ink still clogs my pen" (p. 328). In a chapter overviewing her feminism, Behar imagines Esperanza wondering what the chapter has to do with her, first in Spanish then translated to English (p. 296), even being imagined to tell Behar to leave her out of any feminist discussion (p. 300) as Behar begins to reread Esperanza's life (and many other things) in a strong light of male oppression, before she ultimately uses the final chapter to describe her own life in these terms. In a linear sequence of stories, each story interprets the one before it;

reading from back to front, then, Behar's sense of oppression informs our understanding of her feminism, and her feminism seemingly controls her presentation of Esperanza, forming the book into the reverse of a hermeneutic dialogue. She deploys Esperanza to enforce what she already knew. Again, the appropriateness of the strategy depends on the circuit of the text: therapeutic, activist, ethnographic, or some complex combination. Unfortunately, the text seemed to lodge obstructively in the path of anthropology's evaluation of reflexivity, where it had very little business. The text could have been written differently and retained its intentions, but a reader can't get past a writer's clogged pen nor can the writer do anything about having one, except to write her way through it.

In a more abstract vein reflecting on ethnographic representation, *Writing Culture* managed to collect to itself the rays of all the past and even future elucidations of culture as ethnographic product, and so I'll note a few characteristics of those essays that seem to still shape the discussions I've read or been party to over the past fifteen years. A sensitivity to dialogue was everywhere in their discourse, except in the ensuing discourse among anthropologists. Clifford's introduction develops an elaborate rhetorical figure (Clifford 1986: p. 2) through parallelism and a very exclusive (perhaps even elitist) set of intertextual references:

Ethnography's tradition is that of Herodotus and of Montesquieu's Persian. It looks obliquely at all collective arrangements, distant or nearby. It makes the familiar strange, the exotic quotidian. Ethnography cultivates an engaged clarity like that urged by Virginia Woolf: "Let us never cease from thinking—what is this 'civilization' in which we find ourselves?"... Ethnography is actively situated within powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes. Ethnography is an emergent interdisciplinary phenomenon.

"Ethnography" is a unitary field of practice, but is a set of diverse and sometimes incompatible practices. Yet, surely as a word it must be able to be constructed as a being of some sort (although at the end of this motif, Clifford offers that Ethnography is "changing and diverse," and he doesn't want to "impose a false unity on the exploratory essays that follow"). What hermeneutically-informed writer worth his salt can resist the eternal challenge to define a rich cultural concept in a non-reductive way, after all? It is a performance of ethnographic hermeneutics. The allusions, presented as tools to think with, in the product become forces to reckon with, indicating that he is defining as well as writing for his peers. Crapanzano begins his essay developing "The ethnographer" by way of the same rhetorical motif (Crapanzano 1986: 51-2):

The ethnographer does not...translate texts the way the translator does. He must first produce them. Text metaphors for culture and society notwithstanding, the ethnographer has no primary and independent text that can be read and translated by others. No text survives him other than his own...The ethnographer is a little like Hermes: a messenger who, given methodologies for uncovering the masked, the latent, the unconscious, may even obtain his message through stealth. He presents languages, cultures, and societies in all their opacity, their foreignness, their meaninglessness; then like the magician, the hermeneut, Hermes himself, he clarifies the opaque, renders the foreign familiar, and gives meaning to the meaningless. He decodes the message. He interprets. The ethnographer conventionally acknowledges the provisional nature of his interpretations. Yet he assumes a final interpretation—a definitive reading. "I have finally cracked the Kariera section system," we hear him say. "I finally got to the root of all their fuss about the Mmdlyi tree." He resents the literary critic's assertion that there is never a final reading. He simply has not got to it yet. The ethnographer does not recognize the provisional nature of his presentations. They are definitive. He does not accept as a paradox that his "provisional interpretations" support his "definitive presentations." (It is perhaps for this reason that he insists on a final reading.) Embedded in interpretation, his presentations limit reinterpretation.

The figure here becomes obviously ironic, and also one whose stature has shrunk somewhat in the intervening years under the heat of this very text and, to a greater degree, feminist critiques (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1989; Abu-Lughod 1991; Behar and Gordon 1995; Wiener 1999 [1997]). Even in its irony, however, the figure is monologic in its presentation of the good hermeneut versus what science, from the evaluative framework of interpretivism, is doing wrong. I am not here concerned with the obscurantist romanticization of the super-hermeneut per se (see Fine 1994 for that), although my attempts to embody even more mundane models of the New ethnographer from 1995 to 2000 would make me acutely aware of disability. My interest instead fastens on how the rhetorical camera, if you will, stays centered on the ethnographer as protagonist to the exclusion of both the natives and the consumers of ethnography.²³ The decontextualized New ethnographer tends to be a very muscular but faceless figure who acts intentionally, moves freely, enters whole-heartedly into choice social relationships, is either strongly gendered or else strongly hermaphroditic, is wide awake to aporia, and is loving it. No one does this hero narrative better than Stoller (1989) in passages such as the following (p. 55; there are many more like it): "On their existential path in inner space, sorcerers, in the end, create their own sorcery; painters create their own styles. And just as writers need to spend many years searching for their own voices, so we anthropologists need to find a 'voice' and create works which bring readers to dwell within us as we walk along our solitary paths in the field, exposing our hearts so full of excitement, fear, and doubt." These figures are representative of how, almost inevitably, ostensibly-reflexive discussions of practice carried out at a very decontextualized remove (perhaps in accordance with the broad public being addressed) must fictionalize their object, personifying a collection of qualities that can be true

²³ Such is true for proponents of ethnographic realism as well, by the way, although the inherent exchangeability of the scientific gaze keeps the figure of the realist ethnographer from becoming quite so (to twist a famous phrase) full of himself through the detour of the other.

for the generalized portrait without being potentially falsifiable within any given instance. That is, New Ethnography can never be the wrong thing to do. Literary critics call this technique a forced subject position.

The often vitriolic responses of committed realists, who seem to feel rather justifiably threatened, were equally adamant in their refusal to understand interpretivism, much less postmodernism, as anything but the bad practice of their own scientific project (Gellner 1988, Sangren 1988, Spencer 1989). The recognition that even the most panoptic ethnographies embody rhetorical strategies (E. Brunner 1986, Ramos 1987, Van Maanen 1988, Geertz 1988, Fardon 1990) provoked some to call for a literal return to reason. Jacobson (1991) offers a cogent set of protocols for evaluating the arguments of ethnographies, but one keyed to a distinction between personal experience ("reflexive accounts") versus the accurate, "verifiable" (his word) model of a culture. Thus he seeks explicitly to read for the intrinsic separation of reason (including Toulmin argument schemes) from rhetoric. To the extent that an ethnography does adhere to his warrant by claiming "this place is out there," rather than "this happened to me and needs to be explained," there is indeed a crucial question of whether the variety and quantity of evidence adequately backs up the claims, and Jacobson provides excellent readings based on these terms. On the other hand, Lett (1997) adopts a purely logocentric standard of rhetoric (bad) versus free-standing Reason (good), constituting a total Enlightenment revival.²⁴

What remained largely off the table in all these discussions—among other things, I'm sure—was the irreducible fact that at least two very different pragmatic concerns, requiring different forms of reasoning, were being indexed as "ethnography." Logicians distinguish between universal generalizations, which we can say aren't quite so universal, such that "for

²⁴ Incidentally, hearty kudos to Steven Tyler for his accomplishment of being the only person I know of to first be kicked for the "excesses of the cognitivist fallacy" (Geertz 1973: 12) and later the "metaphorical delirium" of interpretive anthropology (Lett 1997: 107), with Geertz this time thrown into the same bin after him. Anyone who undisciplines himself or herself by force of scholarly commitment (like Wittgenstein, Bateson, Haraway, Oliver Sacks, and Henry Johnstone) has a special place in the heart of my text.

everything in this domain, the following holds true"; versus existential generalizations, such that "it is true that the following exists in at least one place and it couldn't have gotten there by itself." The former is realistic, overarchingly inductive, and undergirds our human as well as ethnographic ability to refer to objects that can be communicatively exchanged with others. Its discourse fits within the circuit that generates and monitors macro-level structures like public policy. The other, which is reflexive with respect to its own language and intentionality, marks the supercession of abduction over induction. It has proven more suited to the study of movement (which can't be observed in itself) and cultural generativity. It circulates among individual readers, who ideally will do the work of synthesizing the textually-opened world into the fabric of their personal and professional practice, often without entering into any practical context in which they might reasonably be expected to give a hoot about whether the ethnographic present is past or ever came to pass. The valid postmodern argument that scientism categorically mistakes its "we can act as if" models for positive descriptions of objective reality was often levied on the basis that postmodernism's agnosticism is epistemologically "right," which it often is in its soberer formulations; and therefore, so the claim goes, all anthropologists ought to do the right thing, sometimes glossed as the even-more-scientific thing. A very different, rarely-adopted tack would be to address the real-world dangers of naïve realism, which often manifests itself by mistaking an image effected by one's theoretical lenses as the cause of one's theoretical observation. "Grounded theory" (Glazer and Strauss 1967) adopts this sort of scientism by assuming collection practices to be entirely passive, but again the point is not to decry science or even scientism, so much as to monitor its contingencies so that scientific Gnosticism doesn't start hurting people. Any turn away from reflexivity poses this risk.

The Ethnographer figured in Crapanzano's essay may be the only translator I've heard of who translates for no one in particular (except an often-cited "we"), in no particular context, and into no particular discourse

but his own. The passage figures translation within a particular speech act, or a plurality of such acts in which we “overhear” him do particular hermeneutic feats, while taking for granted the abstraction of this trope to the level of a public, where the dynamics can in fact be very different. The fetishization of the ethnographer and of ethnography from within the framework of Ethnography as a free-standing institution provide no materials whatsoever for a view of ethnographic practices in their contexts of use by students, natives, or policy makers. When ethnography is taken either as the end product or the process leading to it, the circuit of anthropological knowledge is artificially closed. All parties to the discussion did and largely do adopt a training-centered orientation, such that, given that anthropology is what anthropologists do, the institution ought to be defined in terms of conduct. Bourdieu terms this orientation “illusio,” which of course doesn’t do much to bring about the Revolution. Rose (1993: 197) says it well: “Ethnographers’ lives, like the works they have written, have been standardized since Malinowski.” I am suggesting that the question of what an ethnography ought to be—in fact, what all ethnographies turn out to have always been—depends on where, for whom, and to what end it is to be, which has been almost universally taken for granted within the public debates. As a case in point, I agree with a common critique that to do meta-ethnography is explicitly to not-do ethnography. But the George Stockings, James Cliffords, and all the students in the world, ages one to ninety-two, can claim to be productively studying anthropology in the way that I am doing here, from a critical distance. Doing so teaches about more than what anthropologists do; New ethnographies are where the Ricoeur meets the road, after all, and so they interrogate what it means to be human by way of their legible process as much as their subject.

As another form of self-reference, embodiment has become a well-theorized phenomenological method, which should be distinguished from casual misrecognitions of sensuous narratives as being in themselves “very phenomenological.” Where self-referencing narrative and self-critical meta-

ethnography focus on the ethnographer's fabrication within institutionalized methods and discourses, embodiment as a method has often sought to reduce the load carried into the field as a means to apprehend other embodied perspectives in dialogue—that is, without the institution of anthropology constantly giving voice to the ethnographer and natives. Thomas Csordas (1994, 2002) provides one of the most rigorous formulations of a cultural phenomenology that seeks to get away from (implicitly) Ricoeur's model of the text (Ricoeur 1979 [1971]), which was so formative for interpretive anthropology:

[T]he starting point of my analyses had been language—symbols, rhetoric, performance, persuasion, narrative, and ritual utterance were the substance of healing rituals and of patients' reflective accounts of those rituals. All of these were primarily forms of representation, and stopped just short of capturing the existential richness of being-in-the-world. Understanding healing in terms of representation is not adequate because, even though concepts such as performance and persuasion have substantial experiential force, ultimately representation appeals to the model of a text. No matter how successful literary scholars might be in animating texts, in bringing them to life, textual(ist) interpretations remain inflections of experience, slightly to the side of immediacy. The missing ingredient is supplied by the notion of being-in-the-world, from phenomenological philosophy, insofar as it speaks of immediacy, indeterminacy, sensibility—all that has to do with the vividness and urgency of experience. My attempt to place these ideas in dialogue rests on the proposition that if studies of representation are carried out from the standpoint of textuality, then complementary studies of being-in-the-world can be carried out from the standpoint of embodiment (Csordas 2002: 3).

The idea of cultural representation of which Csordas accuses his earlier self is indeed a valid target for criticism; there is more to cultural dynamics than semiotic coherence. However, we can also understand Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion as a much more phenomenological method for exposing the contingencies and histories of texts, which takes the bottom out

of the anthropologically-inherited idea of the text as a dehistoricized surface to be read at face value.

Merleau-Ponty's much-celebrated "being-in-the-world," which in its wide circulation has been a little simplified relative to its Heideggerian context, is ethnographically useful only insofar as the ethnographer is out to recover shared modes of interaction. The idea of "immediate" experience establishes a barrier against historicizing the regimentation of the senses, emotion, remembering, self awareness, and experience, as argued and exemplified by Desjarlais (1997: 24-7; see also O'Neill 1972).²⁵ This point becomes clearer when Michael Jackson develops embodiment as a dyadic method for the encounter between himself and culturally-different others, terming this approach "radical empiricism" (1996) and also "ethnographic minimalism" (1998). As these terms imply, the Real is decidedly out there, literally at our finger tips, naturally experienceable, and all we need do as ethnographers in order to inaugurate a truly grounded mode of theorization is keep theoretical truth regimes from standing in the way. His aim is practical: "Our search is for some common ground or vocabulary that will serve as a point of departure for comparison and dialogue across cultures; it is not a search for universal truths or essences" (Jackson 1989: 49). He defines intersubjectivity, which lies at the root of subjectivity itself, as "a domain of *inter-est* (inter-existence) and intercorporeity that lies *between* people: a field of inter-experience, inter-action, and inter-locution" (Jackson 1998: 3: emphases in original). The truth of all that he says can, I hope, be seen from the botched scenes of my fieldwork, as well as the botched interactions

²⁵ Worth noting is the fact that cultural phenomenologists routinely appeal to Merleau-Ponty's early classic (1962 [1945]), although the philosopher rode a steep learning curve until his death, at which time his unpublished papers (1968) show a renewed concern for a non-Hegelian dialectic much more grounded upon the socially-organized quality of "immediate" sensation. "To have the idea of 'thinking' (in the sense of the 'thought of seeing and of feeling'), to make the 'reduction,' to return to immanence and to the consciousness of . . . [sic] it is necessary to have words"; and, although there is wordless perception, it comes down to the fact that "there are fields and a field of fields, with a *style* and a typicality" (1968 [1959]: 171).

presented in the next chapter, both of which also demonstrate the limitations of any ideology of “immediate” experience and the productivity of a theoretical interruption of the senses. Embodied understanding plays upon a dialogue between shared embodiment and semiotic difference, which establishes the theoretical limits of this method. The endpoint of ethnographic minimalism would perhaps look like Stoller’s imaginative horizon for a form of ethnographic representation in which “the event becomes the author of the text and the writer becomes the interpreter of the event who serves as an intermediary between the event (author) and the readers” (Stoller 1989: 54). This disappearing ethnographer walks on privileged ground.

These Dialogical approaches expressly seek to counter the sort of analytic that extracts its materials from the field only to refine them into instruments in a different location for ultimate use in carving up the field. The critiques against Freud’s structural model, British structuralism, and cognitivism are examples that needn’t be rehearsed here. Ethnography dislikes the detached analyst who looks for the controls that will filter out complex interference. The process and principle of social organization exemplified in the previous section, on the other hand, incorporates the phenomenological critique of structure while using the textual products of interpretation as the instrument with which to interrogate the field. Attention to the social organization undergirding “immediate” experience marks a shift from a dyadic understanding of field relations, in which participants and observers negotiate understandings on the basis of functional iconicities within some embodied or semiotic domain, to a triadic relation that is analytical in its instrumental use of a third discourse to drive a wedge into the appearance of the scene. Analytical reflexivity, then, projects a metacommunicative layer that arises from the field, interpreting it.

This analytical usage became fundamental to the projects of both Garfinkel and Bourdieu, albeit in ways diametrically opposed to one another. Garfinkel conceived of subjects as (ethno)methodologists constantly

displaying a reflexive process of making sense out of one another's actions according to typified schemas, which were themselves the object of methodical attention. This orientation is to be found in the linguistic concept of metapragmatics (Silverstein 1993, 2003) and in G. H. Mead's formative idea of the self as nominal subject ("I") who is always a perception by the speaker of the speaker's self in relation to a field of action (Mead 1934). Caton (1993) nicely brings Mead and metapragmatics together in a formulation of "implicit metapragmatics," intimating that embodied as well as all semiotic modes of self awareness may well be interactional, as I have been arguing, although his discussion quickly returns to the specific topic of reflexive language.

Meanwhile, the paradoxical consequence of the ethnomethodological observation of reflexivity is to treat the observer's gaze as unclouded. Because analysis records what actors display about their understandings of one another and the scene, the analysis is treated as passively objective (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). On the other hand, it is instead the unconsciousness of actors with respect to objective conditions that constitutes the foundation of Bourdieu's theory of practice.²⁶ Reflexivity becomes the property of an observer who has to be in a position of indifference with respect to the awareness actors possess as a function of their investiture in the field: "It is only on condition that we take up the point of view of practice-on the basis of a theoretical reflection on the theoretical point of view as scholastic point of view, as a nonpractical point of view, founded upon the neutralization of practical interests and practical stakes-that we have some chance of grasping the truth of the specific logic of

²⁶ In Bourdieu's classic example (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]: 5-8), to have too perspicuous a grasp of the self interest inherent in balanced reciprocity would destroy the gifting institution. It is important, then, that actors misrecognize structure in terms of the flow of practice, and that a culture not have a theoretical concept of itself. "The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, made body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as 'stand up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand'" (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]: 94).

practice" (Bourdieu 1990b [1989]: 384-5; see also Bourdieu 1998 [1994]). His contribution to the idea of reflexive sociology, then, counters its own empiricism by taking up a position surveying the logic of its own practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). This is a strange legacy of Plato's formulation of action as an inhibitor of reflection. Disinterest is established with respect to "the game," so the same individual can, in theory, modulate between objectivity and interest; but because the outcome of the game, as a social field, invariably plays back upon the individual, there seems in reality no possibility to be disinterested if one is a participant, schizophrenia notwithstanding. As it happens, the sociologist in Bourdieu's account does turn out to be fundamentally an outsider to the social milieu, with the notable exception of the reflexive sociologist. I can't quite get my mind around it, practically speaking, since Bourdieu is writing reflexive sociology and thereby seems to be violating his own precondition.

A very routinized, domesticated form of sociological reflexivity has turned out to be the most enduring residue of ethnographic reflexivity, so that the "I" of the ethnographer is virtually always transparent, save for whatever master sociological categories become relevant as mechanisms of solidarity or oppression. We know if she is not male, not White, not straight. Anything more individualized, anything more dynamic within the interpretive process, must inevitably remain a matter of one's particular sensitivities, and its incorporation into research will likely be labeled "experimental." Once analysis moves beyond the macro-level institutional structures with which sociology tends to concern itself—in fact, as one moves toward immersive ethnography or everyday life—self awareness as a modulation between Mead's subjective-reflexive "I" and the practical-objective "me" has to have a much more porous inside edge than Bourdieu portrays. Even more fundamentally, however, I argue that the observer stance is itself a sociological cover story for the participatory field in which observer and objects are constituted in relation to one another. An analytical reflexivity grounded in the interpretation of this third field, in which the analyst is not

transparent (Garfinkel) and not the isolated product of a game located outside the field (Bourdieu), is what I have tried to practice.

Julie Tailor provides an apt metaphor for this procedure as she describes looking at her experiences of Tango in an unorthodox way (Tailor 1998: xiv). Almost as a joke, she began to make a flip-book out of still frames taken from the video recording of herself dancing, only to realize that the stylized pixilation produced by thumbing through the pages transformed the experience of what she saw on the film into what she had experienced in the act:

I looked among the many extra photos that had been omitted in my first selection process, and restored many more of those that had been photographed from the film. The slight improvement suggested something completely new: I could add from my reserves even more photos, some of them duplicates, some of them photos of contiguous frames, contrasting with my initial use of every three or four frames of the film. The result was that the flipbook sequences could accentuate movement in a way that the original film had not, drawing attention to a movement that had moved me deeply but one that had been fleeting. What I saw corresponded to what I had seen and what I had danced in Buenos Aires. Other images not dealing with dance brought memories and associations that many Argentines make as they dance, as intimated by the fact that this imagery arises in a film about tango. This was what I had seen, what I had danced, and what many of us had felt. Insofar as those associations corresponded to what I remembered and therefore wanted to communicate about dancing, it was, as dancers sometimes say, my tango. But in this case all of it was on paper. I was choreographing my paper tango.

Perhaps the most interesting facet of her experiment comes from the fact that the continuity of the film was, in the first place, an optical illusion in which the mind projects fluidity onto a series of still-lives at perhaps sixty frames per second. According to vision science, natural vision is hard-wired to dis-attend this pixilation (Rensink 2002a). "Change blindness" is the term psychologists use to describe an effect in which subjects fail to perceive rapid changes of the visual scene, such as removing the engines from the picture of an airplane for a split second of viewing if there is a single blank frame

between the two different images. "It should be emphasized that change blindness is a true blindness (failure to see the change), and not an amnesia (forgetting a change that was perceived)" (Rensink 2002b: fn. 1). Verbal cues or something else that tells the person where to look makes change visible. After numerous experiments, scientists conclude, "perception of change is mediated through a narrow attentional bottleneck, with attention attracted to various parts of a scene based on high-level 'interest'" (Rensink, O'Regan, and Clark 1997). It is this sort of loop that refutes the idea that stylization, as a management of attention, is a simple abstraction from the real. Immediate experience is anything but simple. Remember in order to attend; attend in order to understand; understand in order to remember.

Taylor's ethnography exemplifies a reflexivity in which the culture being read and written is, in its personal origin and its textual return, written into her life. Scenes of political violence, the pleasure of Tango, its community, and its sexual domination begin to form a circuit in which the traumatic memory of being raped by her father ultimately surfaces for her and becomes narrateable. This revelation is not what the ethnography is "about." The book's topic is established at the outset: "What the tango says about Argentina, the nation that created it, illuminates aspects of Argentine behavior that have long puzzled outsiders" (Taylor 1998: 1). The breaching of her dissociation does not further this thesis. But it creates Julie Taylor, the ethnographer, forging experiences of tango and "Argentine behavior." The absence of these passages would give the textual structure a false bottom, in that her encounter with Tango wouldn't have been explained. At the same time, the text doesn't defend itself against the kind of reading that dismisses the whole account as being purely subjective upon finding the traumatic memory to be a fundamental interpretant (and forgetting that Tango is fundamentally its present interlocutor). For those who do stay engaged,

what we read is the imprint of what it means, fully, when her teacher tells her to “dance a tango that screams” (p. 117).²⁷

Now, we ought to be analytically bothered in a sense by Taylor’s claim to have recovered her tango from the past. We don’t know that, and we don’t know that she knows. But we do know that its textual presence is constitutive, and has to be read juxtaposed with the presentation of tango: they give one another meaning. The surge of affect Taylor claims to have felt in her moment of recognition identifies the moment as productive. There are occasions when nothing but stories will do. A method that senses the dissociated forces of everyday life, dwelling on them, synthesizing them theoretically, replaying their affects and tactility like a traumatic memory, is not in itself a method for understanding collective ways of life, but it can serve ethnography by disclosing otherwise-inaccessible features of practice. Failures, mistakes, misunderstandings, crises: unlike social practices, these sites are always particular and have to be scanned systematically from beginning to end, one move at a time, in order to learn what they uncover about the ground of practice. The telling is necessary and necessarily stylized.

We have returned to my ethnographic mirages, where this essay began. Based on my recent experiences of writing the embodied accounts for this chapter and the next one over the course of a few days, let me briefly propose a theoretical description of what goes on micrologically in the process of my writing, and perhaps to a degree the process of writing embodied experience narrative generally. Because memory is constructive, no one can rely definitively on veridical recall, particularly of a thought process or emotion, neither of which can be remembered except by being relived with much the same sort of detail, sequence, and impact they had on

²⁷ Here is where my ad-hock term “self-analytics” most strongly calls forth the echo of psychoanalytics. In fact, much of what I suggest can be traced to Crapanzano’s careful transduction between Freudian psychoanalysis, especially the transference/countertransference phenomenon (Crapanzano 1992), and discourse pragmatics. Each time I revisit this text (reprinted in the same volume as Caton [1993]), I find more of “my own” thinking in his text, alongside my marginal notes which span ten years of rereading.

the occasion one is reenacting (Casey 1987, Larsen 1998). Such data aren't recorded in any recoverable way, even by quasi-real-time fieldnotes, since inscription is itself a reflexive interpretive process. For each of the scenes I have presented, what I am conscious of in the act of remembering is, initially, far less than what I write. It is like looking through a pinhole and catching just a flash of color and a shape (which is something like my vision, as it happens, although I can no longer see color [or keep from seeing it]). I write it down, and in so doing I can flesh out what comes before and after. So it goes, until the scene is done, and so one scene urges the next or previous one. The text is not a representation or "write-up," but a role-playing scenario that puts me in a situation and then recalls the procedures recorded by my body—affect, motion, tactility, somatic attention, intercorporealities—as driven by my enactment of the scene. I write it down. The feeling of getting it right, which any fiction-writer knows, is an assessment that the body-recording has been transposed to discourse in a potentially sound and valid form, which really means a productive form within a presupposed circuit of the text's use. The product can readily take on the solidity of veridical memory. Data are generated through a process of story-telling that starts with the thread of what we can say happened, with as much certainty as ethnography ever provides. "I was there (and you weren't)." My position as a participant is privileged only by virtue of what my body has recorded over a very extended period of time during which such scenes have repeatedly overtaken me. The methodological assumption is that this process is not likely to remember an embodiment that wasn't in the scope of what could have been learned in such contexts. I read the text, and "correct" it where remembering suggests that the description isn't realistic. I tend not to grant much fundamental importance to the line between fiction and so-called "creative non-fiction," but non-fictionists often emphasize a commitment to what "really happened." I can agree, on an abstract level, that ideological commitments shift between the two from veracity to verisimilitude. Because representations are the only surface available for

analysis, I prefer to suspect my data rather than get in the muddle of calling some level of interior claim “true.” In short, fiction is natural language by virtue of its reflexive (in Garfinkel’s sense) reliance on an exchangeable framework of communicative practice. To quote Wittgenstein—gratuitously, as most quotes of Wittgenstein are—“If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a grammatical fiction” (1958 [1936-1951]: para. 307). Food for thought: “It occurred to me that the phenomenon of 'the possibility of literature' is something noticeable while I was looking at psychiatric reports about delusions that patients have. In these reports, the writers take it that the delusions are understandable, though what makes them 'delusions' is that they couldn't possibly describe something. Literature has a similar character; it's composed of possible potential descriptions and possible potential rules, and a reader can look at assembled strings of language and decide that it's 'realistic' or 'not realistic,' compelling or not compelling. And in that sense, the possibility of literature and the possibility of logic are very, very closely related” (Harvey Sacks 1992a [1965]: 112).

Jay Ruby informs us that the title *A Crack in the Mirror* (Ruby 1982) plays off Clyde Kluckhohn’s *A Mirror For Man*, such that the image of ourselves we see in cultural others is distorted by imperfections and lines ingrained in the glass itself, and reflexivity examines those lines. I want to play once more on this image. There’s a crack in the mirror that glares at us (you, anyway, if you’re sighted) each time you look. This is a part of culture shock, the realization that one’s assumptions were geared to a specific place and not the whole world. There’s a crack in the ground, though, that is just a thin fisher no one can see without knowing first where to look and then running your hands over the surface systematically before you’ll find it. That is individual difference.

As the eleventh hour of salvage ethnography jerked toward the midnight of globalization, as the natives and consumers of ethnography became more visible to one another, and as disciplines ranging from nursing to market research began adopting qualitative research methods, the New

ethnography was coincidentally shifting its values from the synoptic representation of observable ways of life to intimate, inter-personal, deeply-hermeneutic, densely-textured, hyper-immersive encounters that required a skilled hermeneut, which would be a commodity one could keep selling through the unique product of one's laboring body until the end of time. The role of ethnographer thereby came to depend on a very exclusive set of standards of embodiment. It mattered where one's data came from, and the decoupage of reports, histories, census data, etc., were to be scrunched in between narrative observations of one's own participations. Expressed in terms of immersive embodiment and the ability to pull one's own weight in the field, ethnography took on a set of standards that made the idea of a disabled ethnographer run counter to not only conventional methodology but the hero narrative tacitly sewn into how one's work should be written and evaluated.

Inevitably, I had to confront the question, "how will I as a blind man conduct ethnography?" I found ways to follow the traditional procedures, and I folded those procedures into the conventions of ethnographic writing. The smooth surface of the resulting text (and of my memory) made the next question much more difficult to formulate: can the product be comparable in terms of the soundness of its observations, given that social participation will be quantitatively diminished and qualitatively altered, regardless of the energy I as a typical human can expend? The evidence of my ethnographic memories suggests that a text, broadly conceived, can be thicker than the data of lived experience, with the result being a set of source amnesias as to what "happened" versus what was told, read, or extrapolated. The minutia of my social and spatial navigation, which in any event were entirely carried over from my quotidian life, weren't part of the scene. These conventions drove me toward authoring texts that implied a full, rich, able, mastering participation in culture, without significant reference to the untransposable experience of a disability, which I had ostensibly overcome. The ability to create such texts are more a cause for public applause than interrogation,

usually, and this fact in itself lays the groundwork for how quickly and completely I tend to forget the unique conditions that produced the text. Although there's no law against passing off thin ethnography, better options for knowledge production are at hand. In both the process and product of my anthropology, the trick has been to unlearn the ingrained habit of overcoming disability, since I have found that what I overcome is the occasion to encounter it rather than the disability itself. A hermeneutical suspicion born of reading Continental philosophy combined with the model provided by Garfinkel's ethnomethodological studies (both of which are explicitly phenomenological) set me to interpreting my experiences in terms of practice instead of meaning. The data that became available included biological and/or emotional and/or political-economic suffering engendered by being individually excluded from conditions of agency within a consequential set of social fields. By virtue of this definition, the "meaning" of my disability will always be a functional and processual one, not a categorical-expressive one. This is the view from a forced position outside the ceremonial tent (I don't see what they're doing) and outside the ethnographer's tent as well (there's no cool dark place to look out of at "them"). It is an undisciplined, destabilized, unsettling place to stand.

Chapter 3. Making A Scene

A discriminator is a gizmo you can place within an electrical circuit. It takes in a continuous wave of whatever amplitude, but lets pass only the flow that falls within a set range of values. In common applications, the output into the rest of the circuit is digital: presence or absence. Hence, what passes has value whereas what doesn't pass is unknowable and the observer can make no meaningful inference about it from within the rest of the circuit. In logic, the discriminator is the simplest function for translating values from one set into another. In asserting that this idea of discrimination is also a mapping function involved in translation between one system of values and another, I am pointing to a constituent of semeiosis and not a loose analogy. A political circuit is already aware of discrimination as a prejudice against a present other, and that other can learn to identify and perhaps identify with this oppression within the realm of political discourse. Societies discriminate against groups in this political way, but societies discriminate against individuality in the other, more fundamental sense. That the two senses of discrimination are conjoined can be seen in the familiar ideology of workplace productivity. "We aren't firing you because you're a woman, but because you've missed work while your baby was sick." "It isn't because you're blind that we're not hiring you, but your resume displays a lack of attention to visual detail." "The City Council meeting was open to the public, so anyone wanting to be heard was free to attend." Without an obvious, traditional category like women or the disabled, both of whom are already known to be objects of discrimination, all we're left with is the internally-referential logic, which has dissociated anything outside the circuit. It feels objective, and the only place to place blame is oneself. Interestingly, policies that prohibit employers from broaching the topic of any personal category that has historically been a basis for discrimination—race, sexuality,

gender, disability, or anything implicating these topics—lays the groundwork for interpreting one's existing biases according to other, "objective" criteria.

But you won't believe all the things you can do with this gizmo. The discriminating circuit projects a value-defined field, where "value—despite our knee-jerk reaction for thinking about it as a scalar quantity from good to bad or more to less—denotes anything that can be evaluated as a single-place predicate. Inside the circuit are all the qualia that can be compared to one another, either through explicit quantification (money) or a performative comparison that conjoins heterogeneous forms of value based on shared knowledges ("John is taller than the grass is green"). Screw in a color value discriminator and the result is the figure-ground relation. Tune it for race and a system of differences swims into focus. As a value horizon, it has the aspect of a natural habitat. Thus, the perspective from which racial discrimination can be thought as structural oppression is one in which something has broken in the projector and we've already transcended what Bourdieu calls "the practice perspective." One way to comprehend the circuit in which one lives is to be confronted by an Other as an oppositional politics, an ethnographic encounter, or the impact of one domain of values upon another as a product of one's movement across a pluralistic social terrain. The other way is an immanent critique that tries to conceive of other possibilities outside the realm of one's own values. The latter constitutes an ethics and, unlike a politics, doesn't rely on historical bifurcation to be activated; it can be a self-discipline that dilates a set of differences intentionally and subjunctively. Since we're really talking about practice and not a circuit board, this imagining of the negative (i.e., what the circuit's structure itself negates) is always possible in many directions, and not just as binary opposition. Speech play is an apt model, since it's no model but constitutive of the real thing.

What the circuit projects is the world as it seems, and most of its scenes are not ordinarily open to participatory forms of play. There is a definite tendency for what the discourse of rehabilitation calls "high-

functioning” blind people and others with disabilities to make light of their physical (social) conditions. They definitely do open the circuit to an awareness of difference in a way that avoids implicating others, thereby facilitating the interaction in the disabled person’s interest, at least on the surface. I don’t do self-deprecating humor anymore, however. My play and critique are coming together.

FIELDNOTES FOR A MICRO-SOCIOLOGY OF THE PUBLIC GAZE

The word “scene” has a dramaturgical ring: actors encounter one another, interact, and then the scene thus created disbands. In everyday life, what bounds a scene and packages it as an object is the act of recognizing what is going on. As always, I consider a lone actor using technology or passing through the built environment as a social scene, because the lone individual is interacting with other people who, despite being displaced by time and space, interpret actors’ occupations of the social field in the structure of the place they left behind. Let’s say that a scene is particular and historical, in contrast to a scenario that takes a generalized form and structures hypothetical scenes. In ordinary language, “making a scene” means acting up. I like both idioms very much, because they encode the way we foreground and circumscribe an event by virtue of its breach with the smooth running of things.

The interactions I want to examine do not stem primarily from the deployment of typified, categorical thoughts or feelings about me as a blind person. I have instead collected several disabling scenes of everyday life where blindness as a category isn’t in evidence, at least until the scene is described as a scene of blindness. The public behaviors I describe here do not suggest that any such pamphlet as “My Blindness and You” could dissolve the awkward moments, even if the essentialization inherent in such a pamphlet were at all acceptable, and even if such a pamphlet were universally read; first, because all codes leak (as Sapir would say), and

second, because most of us who teach anthropology know that readers have difficulty recognizing the scene on the page as a scene they themselves play, especially regarding scenes of discrimination. The popular belief is that unfamiliar encounters with the disabled feel awkward because the disabled are alien and the able-bodied person doesn't know what their limitations and "special needs" are. A somewhat more adequate explanation instead depicts the anxiety or awkward sensation as a sudden realization that we often possess all the agility and quick wittedness of a deer in headlights when it comes to navigating a radically new situation. A scene of disabling can happen at any moment. The conundrum, moreover, is no less likely for the disabled person than for the able-bodied one. Some of us tend to be more apt or more creative than others in our responses to disconcerting situations, without much significant correlation with social-science training or even past experience.

Regarding the ten scenes of blindness I present below, I knew them first by a sense of frustration that always slid off into a destructive anger directed at others ("Why don't you understand?") or myself ("Why can't I do it right?"). In that light, they were meaningless in the sense that dwelling on them was an unproductive, negative thing to do. I was taught to forget about them. They were drawn together thematically as scenes "of" blindness by, I would suppose, a very long term emerging awareness that they belong to a category of interactions that aren't reported by others around me or the media, except where disability is topicalized. Each item in the list nominated itself by virtue of repetition; they are among the scenes that I would always forget when I used to assume I was like everyone else, and which now intrude on me whenever I think about going out of my home, because I am very likely to face one or more of them whenever I pass through a public or where public spaciness mediates my interaction with intimates. They are episodic bits of narrative debris I write in the present tense so that their assessment will rest firmly in the idea of their plausibility, read as experience narratives, which doesn't require any trust as to their correspondence to an

original event (the usage is not a commentary on or instance of the ethnographic present). Although each commemorates a specific remembered event, each memory is informed to an indeterminate degree by its repetitions and so they must be said to be lived on the page rather than in the past. At the point of accomplishing their synthesis, I locate my first viable experience of blindness. I was thirty years old, and it would be another five years before I could use theory to fashion the evaluative component that makes these troubled scenes into experiences of what they identify as individual difference.

All these stipulations intend to locate the text as emerging very much from within a practice perspective. Hence, they in no way can be taken as elements of an objective system that I am presenting, a system of blindness. Neither have I isolated the role blindness plays as a sufficient or even entirely necessary cause of any aspect of them. Still, they happen. Bourdieu would discount it all as pseudo-theory. The theoretical statements I make about the publics through which I move are, however, open to falsification or reformulation or use. A deconstructive reflexivity generates the scenes and lays open their constitution, which is the point of presenting them.

Scene I, concerning the performativity of blindness.

With a beer in one hand and a plate in the other, I stand talking to a close friend—an anthropologist—at a crowded party. We have slipped into a serious discussion about my dissertation. I try to explain the confounded attitude some people have had toward my disability, such as a girl I had begun to date having recurring nightmares of being in a car and discovering that I was driving. Then my friend says those words that I used to take as a complement, but now hear as a big red flag of things to come: “I never think of you as blind.” Blindness has never been a big deal at all to her, she insists; it’s only a practical consideration, easily dealt with, not a texture of my humanity at all, as I insist it is. I begin moving from the kitchen to the

living room, walking toward a wall. Walls are often handy means of finding a straight line into the other room, but that is not what I am doing: I am walking into a wall. The house is too noisy for me to hear the tell-tale signs of how the space is configured, and both my hands are full. She calls out urgently and with obvious panic to her husband in the next room to “come get neill.” Her hands wave uselessly in front of her. I am a loose cannon, the plate of food a deadly weapon about to go off in my hands. She is powerless and in fact frozen except for her hands, splayed out in front of her, ready to catch or push something away or make mystical signs, but not knowing which to do. Disability leaps between us like the monster in a pop-up book when I transit from a context of fixed motion to a less-constrained, more disabling one. When the context shifts, I become a very different, surprising being to her and her reaction is panic. Naturally, for me this reflexive knowledge of what is going on stands shoulder to shoulder with the feeling evoked by suddenly being dehumanized, as I in my strangeness have ceased even to be someone she can address.

The scene in which I suddenly become visibly disabled is too much for many people to confront with composure. The gaze assumes that an object in place will remain the same object in motion. Disruption brings a sudden meta-level awareness into being of several new realities: (1) disability is the product of contexts of interaction, (2) the disabled person is not the exchangeable perspective you thought he was, (3) you are now adlibbing a scene that wasn’t in the script, and (4) “Yes, Virginia, there is a social ordering of everyday life.” The return of disability—the repetition, rather—will be traumatic, in the fairly strict sense of defying interpretation, unless programmatic attention is given beforehand to its precipitate conditions. Unfortunately, this reflexivity would mean divesting oneself of certain certainties that accompany privilege, such as the right to be inattentive to things that aren’t of immediate interest.

I have classified this scene as an enactment of a public gaze, even though the house is a private residence and the interaction is with someone

familiar. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the analytical concept of publicness relies, conversely, on a broadcast addressed to strangers. However, this is the scene in which, just as when one's White middle-class friend and neighbor suddenly begins dropping the "n word," a local exchange suddenly exposes itself as the site through which public-defining discourses circulate. Participants become aware that they have been addressing or addressed as a generalized other: uncommon partners in common places. To such a degree, we remain strangers to one another.²⁸

Scene ii, in which "a rule of avoiding anomalous things affirms and strengthens the definitions to which they do not conform."²⁹

one way to handle having an anomalous being appear in your midst is to carry on with one's ready-made habits, letting them sort of bend around the anomaly. I enter a restaurant with a friend and my guide dog, a German Shepherd named Adler. In heavily-accented English, the hostess asks my friend, "Does he need the dog?" Attached to the elbow of another friend, I approach a pharmacist's counter and listen as my companion points to a scrape on my leg, asks a question, and then enters into a conversation with the pharmacist who never once addresses me. She began speaking before I had any way to know that the pharmacist was attending to us. In Garfinkelian fashion, I finally interject, glaring at him: "He isn't interested in how it looks. He just wants a disinfectant." But he answers as if my friend had spoken. Many factors now occupy me in the decision of what to do next, and so it goes.

²⁸ Without the concept of a broadcast, on the other hand, the scene is on the line between public circulation discussed by Warner (2002) versus social reproduction in Bourdieu's formulation. It is the house's occupation by a party of strangers, making it a public house, that has produced the disabling array of sounds and unreliable space behind this scene.

²⁹ Refer to Douglas (2002 [1966]: 49) to find this passage within a discussion of several strategies (Bourdieu would call them strategies) by which societies cope with structural anomalies. All of them are apropos to disability and can be identified with particular scenes in this chapter or Chapter 4.

I am interested, first and foremost, in the interpretive work undertaken by the hostess and the pharmacist. Prejudice against blind people or dog walkers seems an unlikely explanation, so this is not an occasion of following a rule, although it is likely to be empirically described as discrimination. A better one begins with the fact that I have not been categorized as an addressee as part of the frame being enacted. In the first example, we can take account of possibilities such as the hostess' uncertainty over her own ability to communicate in English without the benefit of body language, plus the fact that guide dogs are only protected by law in affluent English-speaking countries. The scene with Frank the pharmacist reaches more the status of an ethnomethodological display because I made a move that tried to falsify any idea that I was not party to the talk. We can assume that Frank the pharmacist would have spoken to me if I were alone, or perhaps if I had spoken first instead of my friend (note to self: add another mental rule for how I need to behave). Regardless, he made a choice, intentionally or not, to encounter an unfamiliar situation by putting his head in the sand to avoid relating to difference.

A disability advocate (Kendrick 2006) observes that this scene is played out not just by the disabled, but anyone whose personhood is in question, even though blind people are likely to endure this scene the most. She sets out a number of guidelines to file away for when it happens:

If you are the outsider, speak to the person who is different—older, younger, disabled, foreign—with the assumption that he or she will respond. If you are the companion of the visibly different individual, simply smile and say "Ask him" or "Tell him" to move the dialogue in the appropriate direction. If you are the person being discounted for disability or any other reason, Assert yourself. Answer the question, pick up the conversation on your own—or, for quick understanding, try talking about yourself in the third person. You might get a laugh, and you'll definitely be counted back into the circle.

Practically speaking, it is good advice and good that it circulates, even in a local newspaper, especially since sociological and sociolinguistic factors will

keep this scene on disability's top-ten list indefinitely. The development and communal sharing of scene-specific or task-specific tactics constitutes a significant topic of verbal exchange among blind people. On a very mundane level, this activity makes up disability self-advocacy, where the tactics intend to inform the present representative(s) of the public ("Never pet a guide dog in harness") as well as an attempt to manage the present scene. Its efficacy varies in direct proportion to several factors: (1) the salience of those scenes for which strategies have been learned, (2) the appropriate and consistent recognition of a scene, (3) one's tactical skill, (4) the absence of any determined intent by others at invidious discrimination, and (5) emergent conditions. As a legislative approach that deals with specific expressions of a more basic dynamic, it will have limited effectiveness.

Scene iii, what paying attention looks like

At the guide dog school I attended, instructors and students alike were often frustrated by students' seeming inattention to what the instructor was saying. I could be given a simple command repeatedly for over a minute and still not hear it. Talking loudly to a blind person is a much-ridiculed bit of socially-revealing idiocy, and I have occasionally myself been accommodated by being shouted at. "I'm blind, not deaf!" This exact phrasing is almost irresistible. But is that the interpretive work behind the action? Suddenly with a dog in place of a cane—a new intelligence to apprehend—with no knowledge of the route or the area, with someone giving directions from five feet behind me, shouting would indeed be accommodative. Sensory overload is functionally equivalent to sensory impairment, and the instructor behind me seemed far, far away. This explanation stands in addition to another, externally-observable one: Speaker A cannot make eye contact with blind Speaker B, whose gaze might wander up, over, be behind dark glasses, or appear unfocused, giving the impression of a wandering attention and, in effect, widening the

intersubjective gap across which Speaker A judges he has to speak. Or, Speaker B has turned his ear toward the speaker (makes sense, right?), which in the common parlance carries the implicature “speak up,” though usually accompanied by a gesture to one’s ear. But in this case he is responding on the basis of tacit and in fact contextually-inappropriate signals. A person concentrating on a sound looks very different from one concentrating on a face, but only the latter is taken as concentrating on the speaker. Neither Speaker A nor my instructor seem able to pose a theory of what a different consciousness might look like face to face, though obviously the materials for such a theory are in the scene. Meanwhile, guide dog trainers around the country are daily reconfirmed in their assessments of the blind as paradoxically deaf or spaced-out, while dog recipients end their routes feeling exhausted and incompetent.

Scene iv, on unreasoned solicitude.

If someone—even a stranger—is walking close behind me as I open the door into a campus building, I make an automatic calculation as to whether the other person will encounter a closed door or one half-way in the process of closing. If the latter, my arm holds the door after I have gone through until the person behind me is able to take it. If I am the one walking behind, the person in front of me seems usually to assess that this casual gesture is likely unworkable. Arm-back door opening reveals itself to be a gesture, a communication, just as the door itself communicates us from one place to the other. The gesture acknowledges that two people are sharing the same action. It is a silent gesture, usually, because one looks back only to see out of the corner of an eye that the other person has caught the gesture and the door. To speak would be to speak over one’s shoulder, which we virtually never do with strangers. Some awareness of the gesture’s unworkability prompts the door-opener to revert to a more formal strategy of holding the door all the way open and waiting for me to enter ahead of them.

Now the gesture has become an act of doing something for someone else, rather than sharing an action. The relationship and the potential for speech have both changed. "How are you," "I have the door," or some other essentially phatic enactment of the relationship would be entirely at home, especially since the beneficiary is expected to express gratitude directly through a smile, nod, or verbal thanks (which of course potentiates use of the whole procedure as a tactical means to establish this relationship when desired). This fact is what makes noteworthy the typical silence of the tableau as I am trapped in it.

The door is being held open in front of me by a silent figure. How the scene subsequently unfolds depends on whether I am using Adler or a cane. After one instance when my dog took me through a held-open door and I split open my forehead on the still-closed opposing door, he hasn't trusted anyone who holds doors for us and instead stands still watching them with an anxious furrow around his eyes until I grasp and open the door myself. So the silent figure and the dog and I all look at each other. I talk to the dog ("Adler, forward?"), but the silent figure doesn't talk to me, even to let me know what they are doing. If I am using a cane, it reports to me that there is empty space where there ought to be a surface. I might therefore be completely turned around, and so I have to grope with the cane to find the surfaces that will locate me in a particular identifiable place; or, if I am not turned around, then there is a door that isn't where it ought to be. It is likely open, but at what angle and how far away, I don't know. And so I grope again with the cane. If I find the door, I have to next grope with my hand to take hold of the door, and as likely as not I make contact with the person who has been watching me, observing signs of a blind man groping their way through space. The silent figure has created this scene by taking away the reliability of my environment without telling me, thereby neutralizing the conditions of my competence and bringing higher-order strategies of exploration into play. Perhaps they assume that they are simply removing the door from my awareness, as if I would now never have to know that

there had ever been a door or a wall there to begin with, MacGoo-like. They will do this service for me, but not talk to me. If, on the other hand, I choose not to grope blindly, because I know what is going on and am waiting for them to speak, the tableau can go on for a stunning length of time. The first mistaken assumption was that opening the door would be more helpful than closing it. The rest of the scene unfolds according to habitus and the rupture to habitus I introduce. Perhaps one in three doors on a busy college campus misbehaves in the manner I have described, which is likely more than the norm for sighted people and perhaps more than would be the case in a population not so weighted toward teenagers. Perhaps one in twenty door openers speak, either out of simple acknowledgment of the relationship or because they have managed to think through the scene against the grain of habit. From the perspective of the silent figure, they've only chosen not to verbally enact a relationship with me: opening the door for a blind person is only part-way the same action as opening it out of politeness, with the difference effectively constituting charity versus exchange.

I'm tempted to read this uncommunicativeness against the backdrop of a culture that has developed a myriad of technologies to support personal isolation. Ear bugs let us attend sounds from another place instead of the present one, cell phones do the same with absent people, and PDAs grant one a form of socially-condoned control over who will be allowed eye contact. The scene provides evidence that this trend toward the creation of personal, private space through detachment may be overwriting forms of public sociality more generally, even where there is no outward sign of trying to create this private space. The idea, habits, and skills of public sociality seem to be receding. When I once asked a student why she liked the online community of FaceBook so much, she innocently replied "It's better than a conversation because you don't have to actually deal with the other person." A relationship exist between verbal articulateness and reflexivity, albeit not an isomorphic one, and consumer culture offers ever-more ways to avoid being articulate in unchosen situations.

Scene v: schemas habituated in one context are not readily available in another.

I can never quite become accustomed to how inept sighted people are at verbalizing articulate directions in face-to-face interactions. At some point, an absolute description like “five feet in front of you and two feet to the left” becomes too much of a cognitive load, and it is replaced by “that way.” Left, right, north, south, and all units of measure, as decipherable language-only systems of reference, seem to occupy a fringe layer of grey matter that any faint breeze will send out of a person’s head in a dandelion puff. Invariably, what begins as a request for information ends with the tongue-tied person, perhaps surprised at their own lack of words or perhaps not caring, taking hold of me to move me bodily. Direction-giving appears to be not one kind of utterance but a complex of speech genres. Normative habits of deixis utilize the body and tacit assumptions of interobjectivity to an extent that doesn’t seem at all easy to remediate. The ubiquitous velveteen and steel queue barriers are a reliable way to bring about this kind of interaction.

“Is this the end of the line?”

“No, it’s over there.”

“I can’t see where you’re pointing.” Or, sometimes I’ll try to avoid the next step by helping out pointing in a plausible direction. “Over there?”

“At the end of the counter.”

“Which end, to my right or left?”

“This way.” It could be my arm, shoulder, or even my neck that is grasped, tentatively or with force.

“Get your hand off me please.” This would be a futile place to have a teaching moment, and my reaction to being grabbed like a piece of luggage invariably puts a tone of command rather than request into my voice. The interaction often ends there as a result, because I’ve violated my role. The

effect is what is known as “being an asshole.” It feels better this way, though.

The revelation I have had regarding direction-giving is that the problem is not a lack of knowledge, such as knowing left from right; nor is it simple laziness that keeps this knowledge from being exercised. The linguistic resources really do depart from the face-to-face scene of direction-giving.

“Hello?”

“Let me ask you a question about the layout of your restaurant.”

“Ok.”

“I have a visual disability. So, if I am standing at the counter across from you, how do I get to the outside door leading onto the porch?”

“Sure. It’s... oh, I’d say about fifteen feet beyond the end of the bar. So just turn ninety degrees to your right if you’re at the cash register and walk forward until you reach the door.”

“Thanks. That’s great. Now, if I want to find the beer cooler—”

“Dude, are you the guy talking on your cell phone at the corner table?”

I have to admit that I haven’t actually tried this approach in real life yet, but I am quite sure that it would work just this smoothly, and not just because I would be out of grabbing distance. The dialogue is well within the scope of telephone directions I receive. For example, the text of an e-mailed reply to my request for directions reads:

Walk east across the intersection and then turn north. Go north approximately one hundred feet and then enter the building. The elevators are to your left, on the west wall of the building. When you exit the elevator on the second floor, you’ll be facing east. There’s a desk in front of you that you’ll walk around and then take the hallway on the left.

Once I was there, I met with the man who’d sent me the e-mail, and when he needed to direct me through the innards of the offices during our visit, these skills weren’t available to him. Even if their availability were strictly a function of having adequate time to concentrate (and I doubt this), they are

still placed in the realm of learned habit instead of “personal” ability. At a very deep level, the speech event organizes awareness according to an order of operations (obviously, a “test me empirically” flag has just gone up, but consider my life a pilot study). In a face-to-face interaction, what locks into place is the set of communicative habits keyed to an interlocutor who has access to the same indexical ground as the speaker. A pointing finger, a turned body, head nod, or simple look are automatic. They have evolved to keep the linguistic machinery young by virtue of inactivity, perhaps. The words aren’t there until the machinery lumbers into place, and this happens automatically when the addressee is not in the same space. In a face-to-face scene of direction-giving, my interlocutor frequently has to do a double-take after pointing and talking for a while before realizing “oh, but you can’t see that,” while sometimes I have to stop them and ask them to go get their other deictic machinery out of the back room of their mind. It’s a multi-layered, pain-staking process.

Scene vi, in which my behaviors are misread several times in quick succession.

Of course, stereotypical assumptions about the blind do circulate within our culture. Sometimes an active preconception is the missing variable that explains a number of micro-level interactions that wouldn’t conceptually hang together without this final explanatory push. The fanciful positive stereotypes that attribute special abilities to us are silly, sometimes annoying, and, at a deeper level, a saddening blockade against any hope for realistic understanding. Avoidance is another practice, one not only generated by structural principles but also reproduced in socialization practices, as noted very aptly by Kleege (1999: 39):

“Don’t stare,” parents warn a child watching a blind person with a cane, a deaf person speaking sign language, a person in a wheelchair. Don’t stare. Don’t look at that. Close your eyes and it will go away. Out of sight, out of mind. The child receives two

messages. First, that people with disabilities should be ignored, pushed to the periphery of society, if not over the edge. And second, that sight is preeminent, that the Almighty Eye controls both consciousness and the world outside. What you can't see can't hurt you, can't matter, doesn't exist.

Parenthetically, I should note that "out of sight, out of mind" is a cognitive principle that we would assume applies equally to the self knowledge of a blind person acculturated through sight-centric modalities of consciousness: what we aren't in the habit of being aware of, we won't tend to be aware of.

Finally, there are active negative assumptions, which sometimes have no explicit definition but lock onto visible scenes. These are the worst.

Somewhat proud of myself for remembering the layout of the car, I turn toward where the button to open the compartment door will be. "To your left." It is a brusque, bored voice, one from the other end of the line in Chicago. I feel for the door, still to my right, not processing what he is saying until the door refuses to be there and he repeats himself. I've ridden this route a dozen times or more, but it will turn out that this is the first time the seats have been turned rearward and the car hooked onto the train backwards. This means that the seat I am heading for, with its generous dog-friendly space opposite the luggage rack, doesn't exist. "No sir, back this way a few steps. There. Your hand is on it. Sit there." He's verbal, at least. Northerners respect physical privacy.

I drop my duffle onto the seat. "Is the seat free at the front of the car with more space in front of it?"

"Your bag is where you sit. You need to move it and sit down so you can get your dog out of the aisle. Do you want me to take that?"

I push the bag toward the wall. "Usually, there's a seat at the front of the car with a space that's really good for my dog."

"He will fit in front of your seat. But you need to get him out of the aisle," he says, standing in the aisle.

"I asked you a question," I say more forcefully, standing erect to look him in the face.

"Yes sir?" Finally, I have found a register that cuts through his gaze.

Once I fall into the seat and situate Adler, though, the dog as conversation piece is all that remains of blindness as a rupturing force unless the idea of mobility resurfaces. Meanwhile, by the time the train has made its first stop, Adler is once more sprawled in the aisle and begins to whine urgently every time the door slides open.

"It's all the excitement," a woman says.

"Poor dog," says a second. "It's ok..."

"He needs to go," says a third. I've learned that everyone... everyone... is a dog psychologist. She's right, as it happens, but what demonstrably obsesses Adler at all such times is simply the act of "going" and not what she implies.

"Is he named after the psychiatrist?" asks an elderly woman in the seat across from me—either One, Two, or Three, I've lost track. For the first year after I began working with Adler in 2003, I was amazed by how many people seemed to know who Alfred Adler was, and thereafter I would just ponder the irony of receiving a dog bearing the name of the so-called father of individual psychology.

"I keep him on a tight leash," I reply. And so begins a conversation about the intelligence and Protestant work ethic of dogs. It seems to last for hours.

We are lumbering through Crawford in the dark as I grope for the panel—they misleadingly call it a button—that slides the compartment door open and lets Adler and me into the rumbling corridor. Adler immediately swings us around to face the outer door of the car. His canine wits do have their limits. "No exit, buddy," I say, stroking his ear. Then, remembering the famous line, "Hell is other people."

The door behind us automatically slides closed again, and suddenly this private, swaying space feels very comfortable. Something in the fluorescent light on the floor reminds me of a linoleum-floored kitchen in the

middle of the night. I am very tired, so that the kitchen sense overwrites my spatial image and a slight vertigo creeps over me.

A man appears at the base of the stairwell. University t-shirt and NFL logo cap, unless it's the other way around. "Are you trying to find the stairs?"

"No, I'm good." I pull out Adler's water bowl and feel for the water dispenser. The space beneath it is going to be too small for the bowl.

"Do you need some water?"

"I'm fine."

"Push the button. Here." He pushes the button.

"The bowl won't fit under there." I show him the bowl. Then I bring it up close to the narrow space. It's too big. I smile at him. "I'll just get some water in the bathroom. Adler, let's go this way."

"Stop!" he shouts. Adler has once again turned us sharply toward the outer door.

"Why won't you go away?" I drag my service animal toward the bathroom door, knock, open it, and am turning the tap on when I hear him say "The door is open!"

By the time we enter Austin, the train is running nearly four hours late, and I can picture the locked, darkened one-room station house floating in the dim cloud of lights reflecting off its wrap-around patio. Pulling out my cell phone, I am rehearsing how I will navigate that space and get myself home. Calling a taxi now will be easier than trying to get Adler to find the pay phone or trying to get sighted help, but the phone battery has died. "I'll call for you," the woman across the aisle offers.

"I'd prefer to do it, if I can borrow your phone." She hands it to me and I run my thumb over the keypad, asking the mental question I always employ to reverse-engineer new objects that have print-labeled parts. Three elongated buttons on the top row are probably call, off, and something else—channel, perhaps. "Is this call?" I hold up the phone, pointing. It is. "And this is off?"

"Here, I'll show you." She grabs my index finger, pushing the rest of my hand off the phone so that I no longer have any context for knowing where the little plastic key is on the landscape of the device. She is merrily moving the finger around so that it lifts off one key and then swoops down again somewhere distant. I stop her when she begins going through the number keys.

"Right. I see." I retrieve my finger and cradle the device again, gesturing this time with the index finger of my other hand. "You said this is off?" I guessed wrong again. She takes the phone away from me and the new finger is likewise appropriated as a sort of laser pointer.

The train has stopped and Austin-bound passengers are crowded into the passages adjacent to the car's door. A small, frail old woman looks back at Adler and I nervously. "Don't run over me when they open the door."

"I won't."

"Because I can't move very fast and I don't want you to run over me."

"No Ma'm. We're not going to. I'll wait until your off before we move."

"Because your dog..."

"He won't move until I tell him to," I say with false confidence.

"You're going to be ok." I can feel her casting nervous glances back at us. I smile down at her encouragingly. Adler does the same.

In the event, I just managed to catch the barest glimpse of a streak of waddling white ground lightning and then the passage is deserted. Now, a man is trying to take my arm from behind to push me forward, because there are thirty passengers behind me and he assumes I am just standing in the dark. I break free. Adler takes me to the lip of the exit.

Watch it!" the porter cries, reaching for me. "You've got a step.

"I'm fine, thanks." I let Adler take the step first, so that what his body does communicates to me where the steps and the ground are. But that movement leaves me leaning down out of the train car in a way that must look like a red flag. I am not holding onto anything for support, and as I

move my foot downward the porter again grabs me with both hands, one on my chest and one on my free arm, as if I were in free fall instead of purposefully shifting my weight downward while at the same time looking for the step with my foot. "Get your hands off me, sir." This is a formula that I've found works instantly, even said quite calmly.

Adler waits as I step down and pick up his harness handle. "Ok," and he leaps forward to follow the other passengers, then we weave through them along the length of the train, then across to the station house. There are people hovering here in a swarm. I don't have a mental map of the layout or my place upon it. I listen, but a sound of idling cars comes from several directions and so I will have to orient myself to the entrance I had used weeks before when I left town, and remember the steps I had taken from the taxi to that entrance. At my "inside" command, we dodge several knots of people, turn the corner of the building, and then Adler is placing his nose near the handle of the door. Blessedly, no one takes responsibility for the blind man going this way and that, touching the door of the locked and darkened station, or subsequently moving out toward the curb.

The incandescent dot atop the taxi bobs toward me, and it is time to begin planning for contingencies in case the driver is afraid of German shepherds or speaks broken English. In the former case, the recommended strategy is to get the dog into the cab the minute the driver starts to protest, so that you can carry on the argument from inside. I'd rather skip it. The night air has shed most of its heat and there is a breeze that makes space itself something good to touch. Theoretically, I know with confidence how we would walk the twenty blocks to my apartment. The only barrier, which is absolute, is not knowing how to get from the station house through the parking lot to the street, because I know the taxi swerves to get here. I hear the door to the cab open, twenty feet ahead and to my left, so I move Adler purposefully toward it.

Scene vii, in which I recover context awareness despite my tacit adaptive strategies

A voice off to my left and slightly in front of me says "It's behind you" and I turn around, immediately feeling anxious because somehow I know I have turned the wrong way despite knowing, too, that I have followed the instruction according to a rational procedure. What procedure? What direction? I have turned a hundred twenty degrees to my right rather than 180 degrees. There's never enough time to work it out properly, and frankly I don't even know what piece I'm missing. Surely, this is what aphasia is like, but here the problem always involves indexical references to my body.

Why? Because, as I have finally concluded, I transpose my perspective with the speaker's, whose vision I habitually appropriate, then draw a line from that person through my body so that "behind" is where it emerges on the far side. I turn in that direction. Similarly, "in front" of me is likely to be more in the direction of what is in front of the person giving directions. Coincidentally, I happened to be in the midst of typing this paragraph when a blind colleague entered the office and, without any priming from me, told me the precise same rationale for problems she has been having with directions her husband gives her when they are walking together, despite ten years living together with her blindness. "And he gets frustrated with me, like, 'Why don't you listen?' I don't know what it was, but last night I suddenly realized. When he says 'in front of you,' I turn toward what's in front of him, and what's behind me will be what's behind me from his perspective" (in fact, she began the conversation by recounting a "silent door opener" scene). She spent ten years repeating the scene of being an incompetent direction-taker before the pieces came together, while it took me much longer. All one would need is a camera and an undergrad to test the viability of this theory as a predictive framework; but even if the numbers don't line up precisely, what remains evident and in fact inevitable is that a blind person accustomed to using another person's eyes to see will be habitually decentered from the axis of their own two eyes, as well as

being likely to be less aware of the relationship between the orientation of their body as it compares to their head, which might well be turned toward the speaker.

My colleague was relieved that her theory had some support. "So, it's just par for the course, then." Ten years isn't long enough to keep her from feeling like a newcomer to blindness, and she listens to me as to an old veteran. It might be significant that it's a sighted student in an adjacent office cubical who asks, "so what is the right way to do it?" I ponder. Maybe it's just always going to be rocky? I think about it some more. How about standing shoulder to shoulder with the blind person, so that the problematic variable is removed? I also suggest to my colleague that we as blind people ought to get into the habit of centering ourselves bodily, starting with where our feet are pointed. One more skill to learn, one that'll have to be practiced in the flow of complex movement under an already divided consciousness, one that in fact works against the adaptive skill of decentering one's perspective in the first place. She is reluctant to think of it as her responsibility, and is skeptical that it can be done. I am meanwhile skeptical about the educatability of the public in the way of standing shoulder-to-shoulder, but her husband might be trainable.

Scene viii, on the ethics and benefits of being reflexive.

"I forget that you are blind" is something I hear either after blindness has become a topic of discussion or else when the first bump occurs after passing out of an inclusive field into a disabling one where I have stumbled or had to ask for help. A hearing-impaired friend for a long time had to pointedly twist my head back to face her or move aside my arms because I have a habit of propping my elbows on the table and clasping my hands in front of my face. "I can never remember that you are lip-reading." Interactions can be made disabling because the disability category is not present enough.

A similar example is my standing at full height to talk with a colleague confined to a wheelchair. This arrangement forced him to always crane his neck at an uncomfortable angle, which is what he pointed out to me, and also might well in effect inscribe the interaction with a power imbalance that the wheelchair-bound person is incapable of escaping (i.e., being talked down to). I might, on the other hand, feel inferior in this posture of standing at attention, but I have a freedom of movement to shift position. I was talking to a prominent disability scholar at an academic conference, and what he pointed out about my standing position clarified an ambiguous sensation I'd had while talking to him. Squatting down was an act outside the protocols for corridor talk. It felt extremely rational and liberating, like new knowledge. It's amazing how squatting in a conference hotel hallway can grant such a superior perspective on the flow of traffic.

Disability, and in fact any other condition that defines the horizon of agency, can be too present to actors or not present enough. As with any habituated practice, reflexive awareness of how one is operating can easily slip out of reach, leaving one with a set of routinized procedures applied bluntly to new situations. That awareness is very difficult to retrieve, and to a varying degree might not even lie within one's own history. At that point, we are left interacting with an array of essentialized objects and proscriptions in place of an agile attentiveness to signs of difference. Because my mother had two visually-impaired children, she acquired the habit of rapping her knuckles against the car in order to orient my brother or me as we approached it. The friends she has made since the two of us left home stayed slightly bewildered until, apparently after years of turning to each other with quizzical looks whenever she performed this strange ritual, they finally broke down and asked her what she was doing. Naturally, she didn't know she was still doing it.

Scene ix, A walk in the city.

If I make the prescribed arc, which is very wide, I very often end up with a cane broken in two by the scissoring legs of an undergraduate lost in his or her own world, leaving me to get home with no cane, as I've had to do several times. So I fold into a smaller space on this crowded campus sidewalk and swing the cane tentatively, relying on memory and hearing, this compromise yielding the fastest pace overall in this setting but much slower and uncertain than it should be. Forty-five paces to the next branching, which I mentally recalculate to fit these slower steps; then listen for the sound of the heavy doors atop a flight of steps. "Pay attention." We the blind have indeed fashioned adaptive habits for ourselves. Some of them are similar strategies we have each derived independently. Others are inculcated through institutional rehabilitation services. They do not, in ordinary interaction, become cultural practices, because their value is solely in their use (negotiation of a field) and not in their exchange (meaning, as in a valued way of life). The arc of my aluminum cane fills my mental image with a tactile and visual landscape, as well as a sonic one, as its tip runs over dirt, concrete, steel, and wood. This modality is a habit of attention, not a special ability. I'm obligated to acknowledge Merleau-Ponty's famous image of the "blind man's cane" (never a blind woman's cane, in our mythology): yes, its length is incorporated and the surfaces of things are experienced immediately (Merleau-Ponty 1962 [1945]: 143). But things are simple for the philosopher, because he can try the stick out without having to become acutely conscious of its length on a crowded street, or the basic perceptual fallacy by which I come to take the arc of this perception as a landscape. I am extrapolating the entire field through which my body moves on the basis of a few brief points of contact.

The scene branches into one of several common variants: I strike an overhead branch, I miss a curb and come down hard on one foot, I realize my mind has wandered and now I've lost track of where I am. The environment is stable. My route has been the same for years. Granting that

I'm not a computer, one would still think that the site marker of a blood-soaked handkerchief or the memory of half an hour spent lost like an amnesiac within blocks of my house would be strong motivating factors to get the practice of certain skills down literally to a matter of course, especially since I hit these things several times in the same places (or, I did before I began sharing responsibility for situational awareness with a dog). To dismiss the phenomenon by saying that humans are not perfectly reliable begs the question as to why, of all possible candidates, these impacts are the ones I cannot seem to remember—not only fail to anticipate, but fail to remember after the fact. They slip out of the imagination of a "typical" walk to work, for example, which I conceptualize as a perfectly normative schematic map of streets and landmarks.

De Certeau (1988: 118ff.) launches a theory of practice rooted at one point in a distinction between the historical representation of space in schematic maps versus subjective tours—in his terms, seeing versus going.³⁰ A tour is given in embodied detail: "you turn right when you see the sign for the auto parts store and go straight for about three minutes." A map is a schematic diagram of the same route: "Twelfth Street is three blocks north, then turn right and go a mile east to the Interstate." The dichotomy mirrors one drawn by Jerome Bruner (1986: 11ff.) between argument and story, paradigmatic writing versus experience narrative. These terms are more apropos, since de Certeau carries out his argument in the domain of inscription and discourse. Rubin (1998: 56) incorporates the story versus

³⁰ A few brief historical notes might be worth bearing in mind regarding the study from which de Certeau takes the terms "map" and "route" (Linde and Labov 1975). First, as de Certeau acknowledges, the earlier study is expressly concerned with the "rules" by which people (or New Yorkers, at least) encode communicable images of their apartments to an audience who will presumably not go there. Second, the article's presentation is clearly shaped, to a significant degree, by the vital dialogue then taking place around the idea of discourse analysis and the thrust to define a field of study independent of semantics and even more fundamentally committed to establishing the roots of linguistic competence in performance rather than the Chomskian (and cognitive scientific) assertion that competence is based in brain structures. Finally, Linde and Labov foreground a concern for documenting a psycholinguistic method for the linguistic evidence of thought, available only at the level of discourse. Both authors had and would continue to offer major contributions to the linguistic study of experience narrative (e.g., Labov 1972, Labov and Fanshel 1977, Linde 1993).

paradigm modulation into a theory of autobiographical memory in order to understand image-based “flashbulb” aspects of a remembered scene versus the constructive inferential elements that help a person flesh out a schematic recollection based on what “must have” happened.³¹ From my perspective, the distinction between specific social practices of navigating according to a set of map-like relations (paradigmatic remembering) versus an embodied flow of experiences through a space (storied remembering) turns out to have a great deal of explanatory force.

Without question, my projection of what my walk will entail builds on schematic elements keyed to the way I would describe my path to someone else: it’s so many blocks this way and that, past these stores, streets, etc, none of which has any specificity for the way I will, as I go, suddenly remember to duck under a tree limb, move left to avoid a stop sign, feel for a cross-walk. That knowledge will have to spring to mind in the flow of my action, unless it fails to. The habitual schematic map has social advantages. First of all, I like the specificity of “three blocks.” A block is something I experience acutely in terms of its boundary at a street—parallel and perpendicular traffic patterns, light, stop sign, curb or slope, busy or quiet, wide or narrow. A block is generally more noticeable than a structure off to one side, and determining what constitutes a street versus a driveway keeps the idea of a block constantly in my mind. From the standpoint of a pedestrian, a street is always an event, not a conduit. I like cardinal directions, too, because they literally orient any traveler using the same language, regardless of whether the traveler is coming or going or whether or not the speaker transposes their left to mine, or correctly knows their left from right in the present context (most don’t). I keep a compass with raised

³¹ Bartlett (1932) had long since demonstrated that remembering involves a constructive aspect by having his students listen to the recitation of a Kwakiutl story collected and translated by Boas. When he asked them to recount the story, the results indicated that their primary memory was an emotional response that then dictated a set of recollections that would justify the response according to a familiar set of Anglo narrative conventions. See also Casey (1987). Bartlett was the first psychologist to operationalize a theory of mind based on schemas (see Chapter 5).

markings for those times when I get too preoccupied to keep my mental needle pointed while, simultaneously, other cues are absent—when the sun is diffuse, the clocks silent, etc. I like maps because they are a code that can be transposed between two different modes of attention, the one in terms of driving or at least vision and the other keyed to the elements of an inclusive analytical orienting procedure. I work hard to elicit viable verbal maps from people unused to constructing them, often scaffolding their utterances in map-like reworkings until, bit by bit, we agree on a text that will, more often than not, be totally wrong. “So it’s the first entrance past the driveway? The door is on the street side or the driveway side?” A more reliable strategy is to ditch this procedure altogether and keep asking different, sometimes contradictory people until a mile becomes a block and then three doors and then “you’re in it.” My guide dog has demonstrated consistently that he is able to replay with perfect fidelity practically any length of route learned through this broken process of fits and starts, but my divided consciousness needs a mental map for shorthand. Note, finally, that these rationales are by no means universal among blind people, many of whom instead express a predilection for embodied navigation.

Insofar as they become part of a verbal interaction, tours are tied to a presumption that speaker and addressee have transposable bodies, such that either body on the same route not only is capable of attending the same features, but will remember to do so at the right time. “The crosswalk is right before the outdoor speaker that is usually blaring pop music. Another one is right after the smell of stale cigarette smoke.” My success with this tactic, even making these notes solely for myself, is very uneven. A map is, by contrast, a transposable code, a pidjun for communicating experiences of space from one body to a different one. I think in this pidjun, because I also often need to translate my map into a sight-friendly tour in order to use a sighted person cybernetically. This trick is accomplished very naturally, since most of my knowledge of the spaces I don’t directly touch comes to me in the form of sight-biased tours that I have to translate into maps before I can

rely on them. The assemblage needed to forge reliable experiential tours keyed to my embodiment would constitute a private language—not just a collection of particularistic landmarks, but a system for attending to them, remembering them, narrating them, and fitting them together so that the meaning of a missing feature could be extrapolated from other elements of context. Map-making is a continually reinforced practice while touring is left as an underdeveloped skill, so that map-making is the kind of systematic, reinforced, habituated apparatus that underwrites the ability to constitute experience as a narrateable event one can learn from. It also, obviously, is an adaptation that conflicts with my need to be attuned to my own individualistic way of walking.

De Certeau's famous metaphor of a walk through the city (De Certeau 1988: pp. 97ff.) pits a pedestrian speech act against the city as langue. Walking selects some elements and abandons others, but also reforms the whole structure through the privilege, muting, or recontextualization of elements as they exist for the walker within the route. De Certeau's pedestrian is very free. For de Certeau, the city's mapped-out structure quickly becomes the emblem of a dehistoricized, decontextualized imposition of structure—the regimenting force of a mapping exercise. By contrast, the tour becomes the liberating tactic by which a pedestrian can encounter, refunctionalize, and ultimately reimagine space, because the tour can record things not inscribed on the map. Walking becomes a form of play that deliteralizes the text of proper places. Naturally, I live in a constant state of envy for those who have this mobility. De Certeau is not aware of how deeply the city has responded to and in fact produced the mobility of his pedestrian, whose choice is founded upon a built environment that has removed so many layers of negotiation from his interaction with the city and those who build it.

Scene x, inscription.

There is another important connection I want now to draw between the story versus paradigm distinction and what are called the field versus observer perspectives of remembering (Robinson and Swanson 1993, McIsaac and Eich 2002). I became aware that my imagination of routes is only one site in a much more general imagination of both past and future action, and that my imagination of action is virtually always from a third-person observer perspective rather than an embodied field perspective. Whether the projected future is ten years or ten minutes away, I imagine myself from the perspective of someone visually looking at the scene in which I am a player. The past might be slightly more embodied than the future, but is still largely denuded of those aspects that, stemming from individual difference, fail to conform to the norms of what a generalized other would report. The practicalities of blindness evaporate in the description of a mundane activity like traveling, meeting someone, or getting a job. Being there and being blind never matches the imagination of being there from the outside. The spatial distribution of objects in the observer perspective is a map that simply never inscribes affective and tactical realities, with the result that I cannot realistically plan my occupation of the field, a state of affairs that dramatically demotes my emergent competence.

Because this level of reflexivity isn't usually called for, I doubt we can, with any reliability, know how typical of either the blind or the general population this bias toward the observer perspective really is. After all, one can usually modulate between field and observer perspectives as an act of will, large or small, or even mistake which one is being employed, so long as embodiment remains an unproblematic mechanism for transposing the two perspectives with the same practical result. I might never have noticed this intense bias toward the observer perspective, if not for the fact that the machinery kept breaking down.

I locate the origin of this project in two discrete events. The first, noted in the preface and in the next chapter, was a sudden recognition of the

city as a “built” environment rather than a natural landscape. The second, equally sudden and following close on the heels of the first, was the moment of awakening from a dream to realize, first, that blindness had played no part in my dream interactions; and, second, that I could not then remember ever having been blind in my dreams. I began to keep track, and for three years blindness continued to be absent from the dreams I could recall. Neither was I sighted, and so this was not wish fulfillment. Nor was it digestion, given the narrative character of the dreams. My visual field in dream life could, of course, not give me an experience of vision beyond what I’ve had in waking life; but, as is the way in dreams, people, objects, and environments flowed together unproblematically and the concept of vision simply never materialized. I began to feel as though my dream life followed a sort of discourse, although the line between discourse and schema was starting to fade.

One factor separating dream life from “real” life is that all the practical consequences of action have been removed. So long as my dream interlocutors fail to interrupt my agency, and to the extent my self awareness is generated through enculturation, there will be no experience of blindness.

SELF-ANALYTICS: PLAYING OUT OF TUNE

Precisely because all the scenes described here do keep happening, the only reasonable conclusion is that there is nothing to remember at such times, nothing to be learned. It can’t be interpreted as a lesson, because I already know the skills that should have been in play to avert the scene. “Just forget about it.” Because there seems nothing else to be learned from each new instance, the only way they might become constitutive of my self awareness is as general trepidation about going out or else a lowering of self esteem. But I have ample defenses against these affects, and so instead the scene simply slides off my self. When it returns, it will once again be the first time, another crisis. Therefore, they will in retrospect seem like rarities,

although in fact they are patterned and normative, thanks to the normativity of ocularcentric practice. In his study of a homeless shelter, Desjarlais (1997) calls this relationship to lived events “struggling along” in contrast to modes of experience that concur with the conventions in which events are anticipated by narrative conventions that render them easily entextualized, interpreted, and exchanged as experiences. Only the sighted observer might have a sense that stumbling is normal to the blind, and that observation will be attributed to blindness as a privately owned condition—the blind will reject this incorrectly-grounded supposition, and a gap of misunderstanding thereby widens. The perspective of practice does not yield an understanding of the mutual constitution of blindness and the context into which blindness appears simply to be placed. The scene becomes hard to remember, because it was affectively hard to forget, and so it becomes hard to experience blindness in terms of a memory that can become a future resource.

The themes from Scenes Two, Three, and Five appear on one organization’s list of “do’s and don’ts” for “When You Meet A Blind Person” (www.helpinghandsfortheblind.com). The last item in the “Do” column reads “Treat us as individuals.” This last point strikes me as a little ironic, since the reader is addressed categorically, and actions are proscribed for the category of blind people. Both their list and mine reference fairly regular elements of the encounter with blindness. No such list can be exhaustive. Dangerous thing that it is, a little knowledge in the form of do’s and don’ts still helps; but the direct encounter with disability becomes productive and cross-contextually reproductive only when I as a blind person or you as my interlocutor can conceive how the unlisted eleventh scene might look. I argue that disablement is an inadvertent function of habitus countered by reflexivity (i.e., presupposition versus critique). In other words, explicit knowledge of cultural dynamics anticipates the series of scenes potentiated by blindness. A flexible mode of inhabiting a social field comes from asking

questions, and from being attentive. That is the ultimate accommodation of radical difference.

I want to recall a few of the moments when my readings in linguistic pragmatics and conversation analysis led me to recognize how certain formal limitations of linguistic approaches founded upon ethnomethodology and conversation analysis explain a significant factor in how individual difference becomes disabling. As a documentary method of interpretation, discourse analysis itself provides a legible document of a formalization of ordinary interpretive processes, particularly in its optical mode. That is the source of my present interest in it.

Garfinkel (1967) defined common sense as “what anyone like us necessarily knows”; then, by staring at people in elevators and many other invasive procedures that would unfortunately be banned today, he set up deliberately provocative episodes for observing what we didn’t know we knew. One such study exposed subjects to what Garfinkel told them was “a new form of therapy [snigger, snigger]” in which the counselor in the next room, contacted via intercom, would conduct the session entirely through yes/no responses to the subject’s questions. In fact, the yes/no responses comprised a pre-set list for all subjects, but that didn’t stop participants from displaying whatever interpretive work it took to rationalize the monosyllabic therapy as rational, engaged, and above all sincere. Subjects continued to formulate questions based on their reflections upon the previous yes/no answers. Based on the presupposition that the monosyllable made rational sense, the interpretive work consisted of fabricating a line of reasoning of which yes/no would be a proper entailment.

Whenever a speaker says “et cetera,” as Harvey Sacks and Garfinkel both made note of, the speaker is explicitly displaying an understanding that, not only is the talk orderly, but the hearer has sufficient knowledge to complete the series according to the logic with which the speaker has begun listing things. “Et cetera” reflects upon the interaction and its orderliness, as do all expressions that indicate (index) specific conditions of the present

interaction, such as “over there” (relative to the speaker and hearer’s position and other spatial factors), “that day” (indexing a prior utterance), or “him” or “you” (words whose referents shift each time the speaker changes). Garfinkel put indexicality and this form of implicit reflexivity at center stage, in contrast to formal-analytic sociologies which, like Boasian anthropology, worked to control for all occasion-specific and shifting references in order to detect the underlying, speaker-independent structures. Garfinkel developed the insight that ordinary speakers have implicit methods for interpreting one another’s speech (and other actions) beyond the narrow range of denotational reference. Ethnomethodology (which properly references the object of study but became synonymous with the analytical approach itself) provides a non-formalist account of our typified grasp of the present.

Minor punch line: practically anything can readily be taken as the document of an orderly, recoverable process, as the “yes/no” mock therapy demonstrated. Major punch line (about which Garfinkel is adamant): sociological data collection is itself grounded upon this documentary method of interpretation. The basic insight is not that sociological theory is fallacious, but that research is a formalization of ordinary interpretive procedures that we can observe, more or less everywhere we look. Garfinkel emphasized the potential for ethnomethodological analysis to, on this basis, describe interactions in their actuality; I will, conversely, locate the suspension of what counts as “actual” over a subterranean level of assumptions keyed to normative embodiment and communicative practices shared by the analyst as a socialized human.

The disciplinary use of the documentary method of interpretation relies crucially on one of two approaches: either an experimental breach in which the experimenter forces others to display the presupposed workings of common-sense orderliness in a particular situation, as in Garfinkel’s early studies; or, as in the sibling discipline of conversation analysis, the recording of natural-language interactions in which analysts can programmatically control for their own attributions, thanks to the fact that participants are

displaying their practical reasoning about local and cross-contextual and inter-discursive connections. As in any hermeneutic approach, “meaning” is the resulting synthesis, a contextualized text—“we know what we’re talking about and how it fits in with what we’re doing”—and an entextualized context—“we know what kind of situation this is by virtue of what we’re exchanging” (Briggs and Bauman 1992, Silverstein and Urban 1996). Because the analyst is thought to be controlling for his own influence on the scene, the documentary method takes what it sees as being immediate and actual. Thus, in what Harvey Sacks labeled a “proof procedure,” the analyst’s understanding of what an utterance does is checked against what interlocutors display about what they take to be going on in the utterance (at a certain level, I would think that ethnographers of any stripe are bound to carry on according to the same abductive procedure). Interactive processes between speaker X and audience Y, along with one-way interpretation by X and Y by the lurking analyst Z, are thereby diagrammed. Attention to indexicality within that frame can incorporate indefinite orders of other contexts and interactions as well. So, conversation analysis observes reflexive language in which X and Y interpret one another and utterances of X and Y reflect on themselves.

The arrow indicating Dr. Z’s interpretation of all this is one-way, usually. Rarely have I found accounts of natural-language analysts asking natives what they meant, perhaps because the demand-response character of interviewing is thought to make the response unreliable for anything but formal-linguistic data, while asking people what they’re doing in itself drastically reforms the interaction. Still, by returning to Garfinkel’s somewhat less-explicitly studied arguments about the work of the analyst, we can identify the formal assumptions that underwrite the efficacy of discourse analysis:

(1) The recording displays an achievement of interactive order or its failure. Thus, the transcript is metricalized and attended according to the question “how does it work?”

(2) the recording, and then the transcript, contain the brunt of the interaction. The discovery of local orderliness within the interaction depends on locating indexical presuppositions and entailments within the transcript. The assumption is that they are likely to have more local connections than distant ones.

(3) inter-discursivities can be recognized. The linguist generally recognizes when another context is being indexed, either in an obvious allusion or in the fabric of what Silverstein (2003) calls "nth-order indexicality." The transcript one has made defines the perimeter of what will constitute local versus inter-textual indexicality, although the same processes are tracked at both levels.

(4) Especially for the reader, the transcription conventions are assumed to accurately reproduce the analytically significant aspects of the interaction, and explanation will be sought within the transcription code.

Harvey Sacks (1992a [1965]: 113) puts it succinctly: "The kind of phenomena we are dealing with are always transcriptions of actual occurrences, in their actual sequence. And I take it our business is to try to construct the machinery that would produce those occurrences. That is, we find and name some objects, and find and name some rules for using those objects, where the rules for using those objects will produce those objects." The observed orderliness of interactions becomes an intricate, dense, analytical account of complex indexical and inferential logics deployed by seemingly-innocuous individuals who the analyst has usually not tracked longitudinally. "But if something like what I've been saying is so," Sacks continues, "then: It is not merely that the notion that you need to know a great deal about somebody before you can say this or that about them may be a lot of nonsense, but the way that society goes about building people *makes a* nonsense of such a notion. That is: A task of socialization is to produce somebody who so behaves that those categories are enough to know something about him." The linguists position over the transcript, surveying it, acts as a fairly strong guarantee that orderliness will be found in

the desired proportions—which, in the X<->Y<-Z diagram, poses linguistics as, I think, what Peirce calls “thirdness.” Sacks again, in a Q&A session at a conference: “I have a set of rules which give me back my data” (H. Sacks 1992a: xi).³² Fortunately, this guarantee is mostly provided by the ordi’ness of ordinary language as linguists have observed it. However, given that this history of careful observation does depend on observing data to be the entailments of an indexically-presupposed order consisting of such phenomena as adjacency pairs and deixis, there are no grounds for making a fundamental distinction between linguistic analysis and reader-response criticism, which will come as a shock to anyone not equally invested in both paradigms. It isn’t a very consequential claim on the ground, except that the recall of Dr. Z into the frame as the reader establishes the formal conditions under which analysis can be misdirected, realized in situations where the empirical presuppositions fail in some way while the method by which the data are recognized as their entailments nevertheless succeeds. This state of affairs is what we call a misunderstanding, in which an individual difference goes down under the force of (metapragmatic) practice.³³

Analytical misrecognitions are not likely to be detectable after the stage when the data has been recorded, but I’ll note some boundary cases to illustrate the risk. I like the example of Wilce (1998), who in rural Bangladesh encountered a woman labeled mad by her family and everyone else. What he instead heard as her “tuneful texted weeping,” he took back

³² These quotations from Harvey Sacks come from transcriptions, not publications, which underscores the resolutely in-process character of his inquiries. His studies never back down from the basic analytical engine articulated in these remarks, however, nor does contemporary conversation analysis stray too far from their application.

³³ Garfinkel (1967: 38) demonstrates misunderstanding, in the sense of unshared knowledge, to be a ubiquitous presence (or absence) in everyday interactions. His demonstration consists of asking conversational partners to gloss what they had understood from one another, under the condition that both thought they’d understood the other, and comparing the differences, an exercise which simply recalls the productivity of discourse. McDermott and Tylbor (1995) examine “collusion” inherent in conversation, which not only lets unshared knowledge pass, but relies on its underdetermined qualities for constituting states of affairs. “Collusion refers to how members of any social order must constantly help each other to posit a particular state of affairs, even when such a state would be in no way at hand without everyone so proceeding” (p. 219). Thus the dichotomy in which misunderstanding manifests itself is interactive, not objective.

to the city, where an academic recognized it as a once-valued lament genre. Leaving aside the question of whether her communicative deviance nevertheless indexed her posing an unusual danger to herself or others, the incident exemplifies the distance long-term, immersive fieldwork must be prepared to travel on the hunch that inter-discursivity is present in the transcript when the proof procedure fails to reflect it.³⁴ My scenes ii-iv, vi, vii, and ix share this overdetermined quality, such that a breach in the presupposed order is played back upon me as a privately-owned disorder. Alternately, disabilities often express themselves through “botched” interactions signaled by repair procedures that bump the discourse to higher levels of complexity in order to accomplish Mr. X’s social navigation. The observer (or the participants) first recognize a move as botched by the way it negatively indexes the presentation of the smoothly-enacted schema now perceived as having been derailed, suddenly replaced by strange territory. Scenes i and v force actors to improvise under these conditions without, apparently, having much to draw on in the way of models.

In scenes viii and x, on the other hand, the very smoothness of the ongoing interaction becomes the problem, because disability is conceptually absent. The obstructed deaf lip-reader, the wheelchair-bound conversation partner constrained to look up at the speaker, and the blind dreamer are responsible for recognizing the nature of the normative conditions, their individual difference with respect to them, and ultimately for forcing a break in the flow. For this third category, participants (including the disabled person) don’t necessarily know what is going on, based on the apparent accomplishment of the scene. We have probably all observed or heard of innumerable children in school who don’t fit normatively into the

³⁴ Two studies of childhood socialization are also worth noting. Ochs, Solomon, and Sterponi (2005) are able to demonstrate that habituated styles of child-directed communication have significant disabling effects on autistic children, which becomes evident on the basis of cross-cultural observation of different communicative models. Keating and Mirus (2003) show that hearing children lack forms of visual communicative competence that, in their absence, isolate deaf children in mainstream education. In the latter case, knowledge of visual communication as a coherent language system, particularly the “topic+comment” structure of ASL, enables observation of the disabling force of linguistic habits.

regimentation, such that they can't readily attend what is being written on the board or stay "on task" given the standard ensemble of sticks and carrots mass distributed for that purpose (note that I can position them pragmatically without requiring a diagnostic label, which could have been anything from "blind" to "immigrant.>"). They can "pass" year after year, both in terms of their accession and their social unmarkedness, but very often simultaneously believing themselves to be stupid, because difference has been misrecognized as a sign of some variant token of individual difference in the quantitative sense of, say, being born at the shallow end of the gene pool. "Passing" is a disability brought about by the visible accomplishment of such a practical order. We've come to a real Cilla and Carribdis of analytical alternatives, then: externally-imposed diagnosis, which invokes a causal model like Freud's or cognitivism; versus a passive approach that lets one's own tacit standards ride until someone gets our attention, this being a sort of self-interested liberalism that disengages itself on the excuse of cultural relativism ("they're ok, I'm ok").

Charles Goodwin (2004) documents how an aphasic named Chil—who can utter only three words—employs prosody, gesture, and a co-speaker possessing a great deal of shared knowledge in order to produce (guide, repair, co-construct) a complex narrative despite extremely little access to referential language (note that the setting of Chil's home, where most of the video taping occurred, should likewise be regarded as one of his most significant resources). The first few pages of the article detail several surprising communicative strategies Chil has adopted, including use of the prosodic musicality of his speech and a lexical coding made by recombining his three monosyllables. Goodwin concludes that he thereby becomes "a competent person, indeed a powerful actor" (Goodwin 2004: 151). His competence is not clinically recognizable but is contextually, interactionally evident. Goodwin states his critique strongly in terms worth inserting into the present discussion for their own sake:

Sitting at the core of almost all theories about human language ability...and social action in general is...an actor, such as the prototypical competent speaker, fully endowed with all abilities required to engage in the processes under study. Such assumptions both marginalize the theoretical relevance of any actors who enter the scene with profound disabilities and reaffirm the basic Western prejudice toward locating theoretically interesting linguistic, cultural, and moral phenomena within a framework that has the cognitive life of the individual as its primary focus (ibid).

The target here is, of course, the sort of structurally-driven cognitive science assumptions I deal with elsewhere (see Chapter 6), as well as, perhaps, the doctors who declared that Chil, Goodwin's close relative, would remain a vegetable. That having been said, I wonder how sharp the dichotomy truly is between the de facto normative speaker of formal linguistics—Mr. X—and the visible "powerful and competent" actor returned by the recognition of an accomplished interaction. Let me say plainly that I applaud everything Goodwin observes and calls for in his article; but I am responding to a troubling sense of what he doesn't say. That should position my remarks as a use of his text rather than a critique.

Actually, there is one sentence I do disagree with, which turns out to be the source of the trouble: "The process through which Chil's ability to act as a speaker is mediated through others does not in any way put him in a subservient position." Although Chil can exert a force through which he can demand attention, he remains subservient to aspects of the construction of the field in which he finds himself, as do we all to greater or lesser degrees. Goodwin's phrase "in no way" holds true for the context of observation, but it gestures to a cross-contextual property of the actor, which I doubt Goodwin intended. From an experiential standpoint (Boazman 1999), even an aphasia that is extremely mild by comparison becomes a massive communicative and social bottleneck, especially when transiting an ocular public. Chil's agency is produced in very dramatic ways by the very boundedness of the communicative world he inhabits—a recognition Goodwin glosses euphemistically as "how he operates in the midst of a relevant, richly

sedimented social world.” Without co-participants’ willingness (or coercion) to project Chil’s subjective life, as part of his communicative resources, the ordinary public protocols of communicative competence wouldn’t give Chil a chance. As suggested by my scene “i” above, competence is an observed product of one’s confinement to a field in which disability can be reliably averted.

Nothing of substance in Goodwin’s basic argument hinges on the claim that he is, in effect, not only unsubservient but an independent agent; but it marks an undercurrent of the circuit in which scenes marked by the disability/competence contrast (cf. Goodwin’s title, “A Competent Speaker Who Can’t Speak”) seem to exercise, as part of their agenda, a “baptismal essentialization” (Silverstein 2003) by which a public is taught to expect a repetition of the same “level” of individually-owned ability in subsequent contexts that are taken to be analogous according to able-bodied observers’ own privileged accounts. Communicative competence means that “parties with very different resources and abilities (Chil providing an extreme example) are nonetheless able to use language, including grammatical structures that are beyond their capacities as individuals to create, to build relevant action.” The hugely begged questions here include: when, with whom, “relevant action” within whose agenda, with what resources, and in possession of what kind of self knowledge? Anthropology tends to count the peaks or mid-points of performance curves as the de facto afterimage of cultural life, but this is not appropriate when the scale of observation slides from “a culture” to the individual.

Goodwin abstracts his observations of Chil to the plane of generalizeable knowledge by first placing Chil in the social category “actors with extreme disabilities” (where the usage “people with disabilities” enforces the privatization of disability as a personal condition) and by constructing the analytical category “of which Chil is an extreme example.” I worry about how each of the vignettes of my blindness could, assessed on ocular criteria instead of my reflexive tellings, lead to an empirically grounded description of

blindness as a condition characterized by deficient orientation and mobility, as in fact it seems to represent for each of my interlocutors (nor would a supposedly affirmative “he does really well for his condition” go any deeper). Any number of interviews in which blind people voice their frustrations might do little to alter that interpretation, since living under a particular condition has never meant having a perspicuous grasp of it (hence, anthropology; hence, psychoanalytics). We don’t know how the story to which Chil accedes his authorship compares with what he wants to say, nor how what he decides to say has already been prefigured by his sense of what he will realistically be able to accomplish. So long as what we observe is an achievement, we can’t know even the potentials of how the field-constitutive agency toward which actors strive might have been constructed differently in the first place. Just because the system normally works doesn’t mean it’s inevitable. An anthropology of individual difference requires a mode of inquiry grounded on failure rather than function. It needs a negative valence capable of exploring the idea that what we observe might be something other than what we are pulled to interpret (the subjunctive mood is the door out of Foucault’s world of oppression). But the subjunctivizing of the field can’t be undertaken by an individual as a sort of private language; while, if it is a communicative activity, it will require a reflexive mode of self knowledge capable of refiguring the conditions of exchange among self, other, and field.

Given that self knowledge is produced largely via publicly-organized means of accounting for oneself, a form of self-analytics will be required in order to construct the agentive voice when its occasion is locally-constituted individual difference rather than a locally-different but recognized person. Here are some well-known options, recalling the discussion from the previous chapter. By most accounts, anthropologists have had enough of the sorts of analytics that read all scenes according to the same structural and functional story. Ethnomethodology’s legacy replaces that story with observed schematizations or patternings, including patterns by which the analyst recognizes signs of participants recognizing what schemas and patterns are

in play. But this approach is specifically not engaged with the observer's self knowledge of the observer, who is largely absent. Dialogue and the programmatic observance of dialogicality are the alternatives to conventional objectivizing analytics, but as Goodwin points out in his article, the voices already have to be coherent to be dialogical. A third variant of analytics overcomes the assumption of orderliness in two ways. First, there can be a programmatic incorporation of non-signifying tangible affects that don't make sense in the model of orderliness. Although any form of intersubjectivity, intercorporeality, or interaffectivity will due for a start, each of the "inter" components of these terms simply kicks the can of underlying organizational mutuality so much further down the road. No matter how vaguely likely a negotiated shared understanding within one of these domains might be, the virulence of able-disabled and cross-cultural fiascos that end up expelling the other as radically alien demonstrates that individual difference can significantly cut through any model that takes as given an accomplished orderliness or attunement through any level of compensatory negotiation of difference .

In theory, an individual difference might be more in the way of a bump in the night or the impression of having awakened in the wake of something loud but unheard. So it may be grasped as irrational; but, just as conversation used to seem irrational, it might still lead somewhere. As in traumatic dissociation, there may be repetitious symptoms, such as an apparent resistance to being able to embody an adaptive strategy (scenes vii and ix) that signal a preter-orderliness at work governing the inability to formulate experiences and strategies. On the other hand, the protocol for encountering individual difference when things seem "entirely natural" can only be to somehow imagine what isn't there. This turns out to be the most important protocol. It becomes something manageable and mundane when recast as a speculation about the negative of what one knows about the present social organization. That is, test the consequences that follow from negating each of the constituent factors of agency within a field and see if

something shifts productively in one's understanding of the present. It's a simple procedure that could have generated ramps from the observation of stairs without a fight, and which generates something like Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, a classic of speculative fiction, from the negative inquiry: what if the Japanese had won the War? This social-organizational study of the dis/order dialectic (I dislike word-mutilating devices, but this one was prefigured by the word "disability") can be practiced as an ethical commitment, as Chil's family does, or as a critical-phenomenological discipline. Both labels converge as remediations of ethos. Framed in terms of an ethical moment of reflection within an argument, say, or an ethnography, it asks, "what *e*/se might be going on here?" Given the weight of the baggage ethnographers in the field have to unpack, this line might be the most appropriate way to begin any field journal.

Both disability and agency can be expressed in the same terms. For any given field, agency is a function of the magnitude of difference between the individual and the actor presupposed by the social field, compounded by the emergent conditions entailed through the interaction, mitigated by the deployment of prosthetic mechanisms. By correlating agency with congruence in this way, the formula is an expression of Bourdieu's concept of a system of conformity and distinction (Bourdieu 1984), but with some variables identified. The "given field of action" can be largely inter-personal, as in a conversation, or largely a matter of the structural anticipation of bodies—thin bodies, bodies in wheelchairs, bodies pushing other bodies in strollers, bodies whose eyes aren't always following the expected cues, bodies whose attention has to be drawn in by a storefront display or billboard because the builders know that bodies don't pay attention unless they're made to. Prosthetic mechanisms include adaptive strategies, the routineness of activities, skills, improvisational awareness, assistive devices, computer technologies, dogs, and the momentary employment of other people's labor. None of these prosthetics are disability-specific, but many of them become things the disabled carry around in response to social regularities. relative to

a discussion of radically-different bodies in ordinary places, emergent conditions are introduced by the accident of particular people or events that would, if replaced, lead to a very different scene. I've presented several scenes in which emergent affects have a disabling valence, but the emergent can alternatively be accommodative. Likewise, "difference" and "mitigate" seem to preconceive disability, but the set of relations can also generate extraordinary agency. As Rommitveit (1998) has explored, language is itself a prosthetic mechanism vis-à-vis the individual's limited ability to think and act independently. However, we generally also recognize that discourse genres are standardized elements of a field's social organization, so that they can be oppressive and disabling. So, the relationship of prosthetic to field is mutually constitutive, and as a practical matter all three relationships are calibrated by a particular context and what one takes to be going on. The key is for the three components to dynamically differ from one another according to how agency is being locally generated.

The three factors warrant a few comments. I regret the formulaic presentation, since it appears to invite quantification. In fact, everything that can be quantified through this function already has been, and has made possible, as one instance, the statistical portrait of the disabled in American society. But quantification relies fundamentally on the reduction of each of these factors to decontextualized categories—nominal and ordinal scales—which has yielded good macro-level understandings of disability without having much if any impact on how individuals cope with the texture of public and emergent interactions, which after all comprise the ground of those statistical regularities. The function cannot be very effectively used to make a predictive model, then, but these three terms have proven to be the factors minimally adequate to form a heuristic tool for thinking about disablement as the negative of agency. The function depicts a set of relations, not relations among pre-existent quanta. It's a schematic I can call up in the thick of things and use to generate understandings of scenes I've played or haven't played before, without the presupposition that "my disability" is a variable

that has already been assigned a specific value beforehand. It is, in fact, a function that, because it operates upon social organization rather than structures, doesn't presuppose functionalism's perspective on orderliness. The idea of a "difference" that can possess "magnitude" does imply a structure, whereas a practice perspective would favor "attunement" (Rommitveit 1998, Wilce 2004), which is the process of achieving intersubjective positionings and thereby agency within an interaction. Individual difference is certainly a practical matter of being somehow out of tune—which, barring a tin ear, we know is more quickly felt as dissonance than identified within the functional system of a musical key. However, individual difference may be fed by processes in addition to attunement, inasmuch as the built environment is indeed already a rigid structure, and so I prefer to stress the product rather than process of attunement. In this formulation, an experience "of blindness" is not one in which a way of being is revealed, but a fully staffed construction site. Difference in itself makes no difference, but it never exists in itself.

The functional conception of agency coalesced for me as an understanding of how I encounter public spaces, since the indefinite and presupposing structures that permit public occupation, combined with the underdetermination of the emergent event, generate these factors in conjunction with prostheses as an immanent system of differences. In retrospect, the same formulation could clearly have been derived from an observation of Fordist logic; the system of mass production and mass consumption maximizes its agency just as the disabled person does, by incorporating prosthetics into the basic structure of the field and controlling for emergent conditions. Every Motel 6 is leaving its light on for us in the same way, both as a physical structure and standard of service industry comportment; while, to the extent that my environment remains reliable and my computer keeps talking, my dog keeps walking, and my skills are maintained, the situation is not emergently disabling and the analytics of the field pass out of my awareness of comparatively "unconstrained" action.

Post-Fordist dynamics of flexible accumulation and the self as a stylized pattern of consumption (Harvey 1990, Giddens 1991) mobilize forms of agency based on grand-scale circulation, but it nevertheless continues to materialize in local communicative exchanges. Therefore, the dynamics of selfhood and agency under a post-Fordist capitalism, in which circulation predominates over production itself as the mechanism for creating surplus (Lee and Lipuma 2002), disability will continue to be correlated with productivity and agency, albeit complexly. Disability has been largely consigned to the status of being yet another other, one small marginalized special topic staffed mainly by the disabled. The truth is that a theory launched from the standpoint of disability ought to be as powerful as the concept of agency. Ultimately, no account that incorporates capital, in all the senses Bourdieu and Deleuze ascribed to it, ought to be considered closed until it likewise, at its opposite pole, incorporates disability, conceived as anti-capital.

This essay has attempted to depict a dialectic between the practical ramifications of a preconceiving gaze versus a critical interrogation of the present. To conclude, I argue that the formal training that the blind receive, as well as the strategies we invent and often share with one another, do not have the arbitrary learned character of cultural values or alternative ways of life, although certainly it becomes useful at times to submit to the feeling of having shared interests, strategies, and mutual understanding. Oliver Sacks made an observation that has on this score always evoked ambivalent feelings in me. Under his clinical gaze, disabilities are displays of “nature’s imagination” and a disabled person is a unique form of life to be studied: “Defects, disorders, diseases. . . [rubbing his hands together?] can play a paradoxical role, by bringing out latent powers, developments, evolutions, forms of life, that might never be seen, or even be imaginable, in their absence” (Sacks 1995: xvi). I’m taken aback by being dehumanized in this way, but my faith in Sacks as a scholar gives me pause (anyone who can conceive of the accordion as a medical instrument has earned the permanent

benefit of the doubt). Clearly, the assumption that a disabled person functionally “achieves equilibrium” by virtue of a set of practices deflects any real encounter with the genesis of disability. Such is the result when a disabled person is viewed as a cultural form of life separate from the dominant norm. However, something very productive happens when we hold back the tendency to attribute meaning to the physical evidence of disability while yet engaging the difference of a disabled body—a different form of life, not a different way of life; not a sign of anything, but a material. And yet, I still don’t quite like the gleam in his eyes.

Those behaviors that appear to be practices of blindness condense the strategies any human being will tend to develop through paying close attention to specific repetitious problems in the absence of vision’s instant fusion of object, meaning, and action. Yes, these could become a culturally-reproductive land of the blind, but we don’t live there—and even if we did, it would probably be in the same neo-colonial boat as every other developing region under conditions of globalization: how much would a land of the blind import? The spark of recognition that ignites when I and other blind people discover common problems and solutions really does convey a foundation of group identity (see Chapter 5), but it should be kept in mind that each disabled person is the product of a privatized parallel evolution, a process of adaptation, rarely perfected, that, hopefully, learns uncommonly well how not to fall under the weight of tradition. There is one statement we can make as the basis for interpreting the meaning of blind behaviors: blind people are made to concentrate very, very hard on many ordinary tasks as a precondition of competence. Contrary to popular belief (a belief propagated by media as well as habitus), blindness is not a mystery unknowable by the sighted. Forget about closing one’s eyes and imagining a life in the dark—that is entirely beside the point, and inaccurate in any event. Instead, become aware of yourself, of how vision takes the place of having to remember or analyze spatial relationships, how the environment is keyed to smoothing visual interactions, and how interpersonal relationships are

framed by indexical relations to visually-shared space. Now off-load these things onto attention, memory, and reasoning, and maintain that indefinitely. There is no history to take account of, since being blind rarely becomes a stable set of practices that would push the instability of present public contexts into the background. Disability is a socially-organized cultural location, and any usage of disability based on its inducted cross-contextual regularities passes, for better or worse, into ideological terrain.

Ethnographies such as Simon Ottenberg's *Seeing With Music: The Lives of Three Blind African Musicians* (Ottenberg 1996) impose a functionalist assumption so that their solitary lives as beggars can be read as unproblematic social incorporation; while *Blind People: The Private and Public Lives of Sightless Israelis* (Deshen 1992) and many other regularizing accounts observe various strategies and discourses of the Israeli blind as a "life world" of the blind, effectively invoking Oscar Lewis' Culture of Poverty trick in a way that dissociates blindness from any ongoing generative relationship to the flow of interaction. The unimaginability of blindness for the sighted has less to do with anything like cross-cultural failures of translation than with how perfectly feasible it would be in theory to imagine blindness, which is met with the commensurately strong taboo against doing so, mediated through a visual rhetoric of blindness. This rhetoric emplots blindness, not as a lack of vision, but a lack of knowledge—being blind to consequences or else the withdrawn figure of justice with her scales. Or, the rhetoric imagines the totally disabled person, withdrawn from the system of value in which they would be responsible or enter into exchange relations other than begging. Or, conversely, it imagines the blind spiritualist, the super-hearer, super-toucher, or whatever else compensates for missing cultural matter so that, in all events, the blind individual becomes the symbol of nature's balance of good and ill instead of an existential throat-clearing. The affectively and semantically charged figure of the blind stranger is a vehicle through which this taboo operates (and that is, at last, a speculation about culture).

Chapter 4. The Interpretation of Difference

As part of a 2003 interviewing project, I spoke with a woman—affluent, attractive, professional—who managed to graduate from high school and join the Army as a nurse without being able to read, this being somehow the result of a brain tumor.³⁵ “The doctor found me out. I thought they would kick me out of the Army, but instead the Army taught me how to read.” It wasn’t the story I was researching—I was supposed to be collecting data about computer technology in the lives of disabled people—but it is the story I remember, because it was a classic moment when the research prospectus disclosed itself to have been a red herring that lands the bigger fish. She’s in medical school now. I wish I could have observed what the activity of “passing” meant to the process of transformation as she became literate, what influence the secret exerted on her self conception, and how she learned to act like she shared literate knowledge. Her outward appearance helped her pass, I’m sure, since illiteracy in the U.S. comes with visibly encoded class and race preconceptions. The project would have disclosed unique evidence of the relationship-maintaining (“phatic”) function of written discourse and the social organization of practice surrounding it. It would have been about writing as everything *but* a representational code. If I’d been there, however, I doubt I could have merely observed and made it into a story about her achievement of communicative competence, because it was a hard road she would want her story to spare others from traveling. Her world was privatized by her difference in significant respects. The happy ending seems too much like a false guarantee, and teaches the listener nothing about the process.

Another woman, who’d suffered traumatic brain injury, was a senior systems analyst at IBM until doctors discovered that the medication she was

³⁵ Interview quotations are taken from a 2003 research project I conducted for the Institute for Technology and Learning at the University of Texas at Austin.

taking for a bi-polar disorder was destroying her kidneys, and so they changed to a different one that took away her ability to use a computer, to read, to focus, and to remember her past. "Between your kidneys and your brain, you have to have your kidneys." To the degree she has regained a level of these abilities, recovery was inaugurated by playing the pipe organ, an unorthodox rehabilitation regimen to make Oliver Sacks proud. "I used to love to play the organ in my church...I could still work the foot pedals some, and my teacher would simplify the songs to where I could remember them. ...When you play, you have to focus. And when I was playing, I started to remember things." By "things," she meant her memory and how to read. Of whatever probable value a purely cognitive explanation would be, the most rudimentary anthropological understanding starts by observing how things like individual memory and skills ideologically said to be "stored" in someone's head might be more properly understood as things produced and reproduced in particular contexts of embodied activity (Faulkner's "idiot" in *The Sound and the Fury* is a famous exemplar). "Being" oneself may have a great deal to do with "playing" oneself, especially as a language game but apparently in music as well. Again, to leave the encounter with these individuals and report to our readers that they are managing their practical competence in the ethnographic present would not only ignore the dynamics of how it happened, which would be the part really of use to others, but would also use the force of the scholarly text to foreclose on the claim suffering makes on us as witnesses. We can't assume everything's going to be ok, for them or for members of any social category into which the theoretical account places them.

Conventional interpretive ethnography, like most forms of human subjects research, produces its generalizeable knowledge by way of a double displacement that abstracts the researcher to the collectivity of her audience—the "we"—which usually comprises anthropologists or anthropology students, while the studied other becomes a case in point for applicable, often cross-cultural concepts. Any reciprocity of the ethnographic

exchange between researcher and subjects on the basis of the research (as opposed to payment) will be on this abstracted plane. There are suffering subjects, however, who will not accrue benefits on the basis of belonging to a collectivity that can be addressed at this level, or whose suffering is not addressed by mid-range social theory. I'm interested in the possibility of an anthropological discourse that encounters the present scene of suffering not as a case in point but the point at issue. This decision will force the anthropologist's understanding to articulate with that of the research subject, thereby privileging a speaking to difference over speaking about it. It may be possible to say that the disarticulation of the two understandings distinguishes therapy from ethnography, since the latter can use its view of the native perspective to give voice, offer an objective account of it, or several other permutations, whereas therapy is organized around the local dyadic situation and must invariably aim to address itself to ameliorating the subject's suffering. However, I prefer, on the same basis, to identify the anthropological speech act as pedagogical rather than therapeutic. It uses differences and prejudices as materials by which to encounter something outside our culturally conditioned awareness as real, present, and making a claim on our attention.

Sometimes, those of us attracted to anthropology can identify a certain self-selection process at work. In partial caricature, I tend to explain to people that anthropologists (or at least the interesting ones) are social misfits the way that psychologists have personal problems. But there is a chicken-and-egg problematic. In my own case, for instance, was it the fact that partial blindness removed me to the position of participant-observer that then forged an affinity with the study of culture, or did ethnographic sensibility train me to experience and thereupon react to blindness as a social condition of excommunication? I can collect evidence to make the priority go either way, a fact that itself forms a more interesting problematic. Anyone still reading these essays in order to understand blindness as a physiological or even cultural condition has hold of the wrong end of the

argument. Certainly, my entry point was to begin systematically questioning what disability and blindness meant, but I have written from a place where the study of the processes that have given rise to these terms can no longer be confused with the study of the discourses that give them meaning.

Blindness can function as a critical instrument very akin to ethnography, whereas little can be usefully said about it as a content-bearing condition of experience; that is, blindness cannot address decontextualizing questions such as “what is it like?” except as such responses can accrue consequential meanings within the flow of a local interaction.³⁶ In practice, it is virtually always inadequate and harmful to assume knowledge of the abilities of a disabled person without first understanding disability as a process generated in the present context (neither does the blind person automatically have privileged knowledge in this regard). Hence, I am arguing for a reconceptualization of disability by anthropology, moving it from the status of cultural domain or object of ethnography to the status of an anti-cultural process, an inverted world coordinate with ethnographic practice. The “dis” of disability—more properly the “dys” of it—is a rupture that appears in the middle of quotidian things, and this is the origin of cultural critique. Accommodation of disability requires critical awareness. The material for cultural critique is always present in disabling moments, but the awareness tends to occur in fits and starts, a coping process which, I hold, can be practiced in a much more disciplined way by virtue of understanding its dynamics. Hence, I am definitely not glossing disability as a condition of being “differently able” or as conveying gifts automatically. Instead, I am simply pointing to the widely-recognized potential for adversity to activate one’s critical potentials. The perdurant and continuously

³⁶ E.g., any question “what is it like” is asking for a cross-contextual analogy, a poetic figure employed to make the strange familiar. Yet the analogy will be taken as denotative, ultimately fixing common sense understandings of what the thing “is” rather than “is like,” and this move will limit the speech community’s ability to be reflexive in subsequent encounters. Forgotten is the role of language as the crucial communicative intermediary between shared and unshared qualities of experience. Strictly speaking, “what blindness is like” identifies what blindness is not in-itself.

emergent character of disability, however, can make critique an ongoing way of life.

Cultural critique has different dynamics than scientific investigation, even though both tend to become entangled within something like an ethnographic project. I suspect that ethnography as an institution formalizes and deploys the position of being out-of-place, but I am convinced that disability responds to this relation at its core, without recourse to any externalized perspective from which to survey “a field.” As a handicapped reader, one is always already in the middle of the sentence, the by-play of an ongoing dialogue, the crevasse of a misunderstanding one is trying to climb out of. There is no arrival narrative and no exit: only the identification and breakdown of presuppositions to render the field of play navigable. That is why discussion of disability as such is properly grounded within a theory of criticism rather than as material for the scientific method. The present chapter locates critique within the philosophical literatures that have influenced ethnography. However, my motivation has had less to do with my desire to back-track discussions of ethnography for their own sake than my passage through those discussions as I have had to make sense out of blindness as an individual difference.

There is little or nothing new in my formulation of cultural critique, which is in a sense just another heralding of Socratic dialogue. Below, I very briefly gesture to its three basic components: first, the dialectical form of interpretation; second, the ethical excavation of that movement from within rigid naturalized structures; and third, the pedagogical discipline—ultimately always a self-discipline—that compels ethical engagement. All on Plato’s heels, virtually every voice in Continental philosophy fashions a particular assemblage from these terms, as do contemporary postmodern theorists such as Robert Scholes, Donna Haraway, Gaiettry Spivak, Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and others. Because I am after a cultural critique rather than a philosophical one, however, my task here is only to tell a coherent story about how I am using the components, so that my usage isn’t confused with

the distinctive philosophical formulations that have occupied me. I am displaying my educational passage through the literatures without claiming to accurately represent their nuances.

ANTHROPOLOGY'S HEURISTIC MOMENT

The movement in which any ethnographer recognizes a stretch of interactions as a scene belonging to a type of discursive intersection—between gender ideologies, races, classes, or even obviously warring factions—takes place only partially in that locale and extends well beyond it, especially to the scene of writing. The ability to retrace and explore this terrain defines what we call critical distance, and it is in this space that we are open to claims by the Other that might overturn our predispositions. One starts with the classic blockade of aporia, “what is going on here?” and, working from that given, experimentally juxtaposes different sorts of other scenes and theoretical ideas to test whether the new assemblage created by the two together will move one’s understanding in a productive direction. From the instant one recognizes such an encounter, research is formed of a dialectic in which repetitions of this poesis are coupled with a unilateral empirical movement that tests whether subsequently collected data can corroborate or falsify one’s explanation. Synthesis cognizes objects while empirical analysis observes them systematically.

There is a sense in which all who take on the role of ethnographer enact an empirical thrust, long before they decide on a theoretical reading or problem-specific methodology. Ethnography is built upon a system of fields, which can be defined geographically, as domains of social life, as theoretical interests, or as methodical disciplines (“subfields”). Each field is inscribed as a set of qualities that correspond to the field’s originary definition, and other qualities fall outside the field. Furthermore, in order for data to be collected, the field to which the ethnographer goes must be constructed as a plane of surplus experience, although the surplus generated by the labor of

ethnography will be valued in widely varying ways in both personal and professional circuits. Put simply, we know from ethnographers that the field experience exceeds its representation within the ethnographic literary work.

At a minimum, surplus must be spoken of as a plane consisting of at least three points: two to correspond as a line (of argument or data, etc.) and a third which remains superfluous. Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of representation as a sculpting process is the use of ethnographic materials to produce generalizeable knowledge. Particularism can be taken a long way, but I have yet to read an ethnography that does not understand its object through communicable domains such as kinship, ritual, globalization, metaphor, power, gender, capital, language, hierarchy, the sacred, violence, etc. Concepts bind clusters of qualities into objects and differentiate between these data and the unqualified ground across which the ethnographer walks to collect the data.³⁷ The data correspond to concepts, or else the degree to which they can potentially modify the prefiguring concepts is constrained by the conceptual assumption that served as starting point. "The field" (of perception, the ethnographic field, the field of study) is constructed in this way, and disciplined ethnography cannot opt out of its construction, any more than can ordinary sense perception. Again, however, the field as ground is only half the process of ethnography.

The heuristic act of reaching back for the right theoretical or comparative widget to stick onto the local ethnographic scene—that critical move which generates the innovative line of data from the surfeit—remains the *mysterium tremundi* of ethnography's romantic fascination with itself. Einstein called it "trained intuition" (Howard 2004). Charles Peirce labeled its mechanism retrodution or abductive reasoning.³⁸ It lives in one corner of

³⁷ Below, this process will be labeled with Kant's term, disjunctive synthesis.

³⁸ C.S. Peirce introduced the apparently synonymous terms retrodution and abduction to indicate a type of inference which is perhaps at the root of everyday perceptual problem-solving. Whereas an inductive inference states a probability, such that a hundred black swans leads a child to assume that all swans are black, ethnography tends to work at building or invoking models to explain the experience of being in a "different" place: here is a new thing to make sense of, and there is anthropological theory that, when I bring it to bear, helps

Creativity. Of course, it's largely a matter of putting into practice in emergent contexts what one has habituated in the course of long-term disciplined learning from people and places. Like procedural memory (i.e., acting without deliberation in response to learned patterns), the schematization of critical inquiry must rely greatly on one's having already developed the right kind of habitus, with the trick being to simultaneously keep oneself from becoming too much the creature of it—which is what has happened when one learns to assume that the world is all about hegemony and resistance, for example (Brown 1996).

We tend to tell our undergraduates that anthropologists develop special expertise at studying culture, but then struggle to define what this consists of beyond those ground-level practices such as interviewing and (once upon a time) census data, none of which add up to the holistic picture we ultimately write. The missing ingredient is often too obvious to be seen: we've read and reread the ethnographic literature until anthropological concepts like kinship or capital prefigure the interpretive circuitry, hopefully in a contingent and flexible way. We know that we are theorizing, and so considerable play abides in our interpretations (here is where fieldwork at a cultural distance helps keep the ethnographer tentative and attentive). As noted by Squires (2006), this theorization process is lacking in recent appropriations of the term ethnography outside anthropology.

The dialectical relation between investigation and heuristic interrogation can be imagined as a double helix or, even better, the two snakes intertwined around the staff of Hermes: the strong one is truth making, and the more tenuous one that interrogates our truth-making machinery coils around it. This watermark runs throughout my writing. I regret the insertion of what reads like a gimmick at this juncture, but I

explain it. The theoretical framework derives from discourses apart from the data being speculatively interpreted by the framework. Where ethnographies offer explanations rather than predictive models, they are retroductive. As noted by Geertz (1973), anthropological essays particularly adopt this rhetorical form as a function of assaying explanations of local, often singular scenes (although he refers to the form of reasoning as "clinical inference," and thereby hangs a problem addressed in Chapter 5).

suspect that I am reading the symbol according to its historical records, from mysticism to medicine, and not rhetorical whimsy; and, in any event, it is a more faithful totem than that of an endless stack of immobile, immutable, mute, silly turtles.³⁹ The strong serpent is empiricism, while the weak one has had several names—dialogue, hermeneutics, phenomenology, deconstruction, reflexivity—all of which ultimately share the task of explicating their relationship to their empirical partner. The strong one stands under the presumptive declaration “I see what you mean,” and the weak one gives us the neglected tactile etymology of “comprehension.” Disability is the result when individual difference enters this field and suffers under the regimenting force of facticity, a force countered to whatever extent by a reflexivity that is given a chance to refashion the field more inclusively.

This version of dialectics bears only partial connections to Hegel and more closely resembles Platonic dialogue as reflected in Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism, although I depart from Bakhtin’s position that his neologism is a necessary alternative to reclaiming Platonic dialectics (Bakhtin 1984 [1963]: 270-80, 1986 (1970-1]: 147). Bernstein (1983), Coole (2000), and Butler (2005) provide excellent paths through the usual suspects in the lineage of non-Hegelian poststructural philosophy. The following paragraphs very narrowly discuss one or two of these key issues as they relate to interpretive ethnography’s philosophical foundations in order to expose some of the hinges I have used to hang a reflexive anthropology. In other words, non-

³⁹ The problem with the image resides less with the text that introduced it (Geertz 1973: 28-9) than in the way that “all the way down” became a gesture anthropologists quickly adopted as a way of saying, without having to say, “I’ve looked down this corridor far enough and it’s just more of the same”; or, in a more analytical sense, “I already know the function that generates all these things in an infinite series, and there’s no point in elaborating the series any further.” This statement is only valid for certain modals. The fact that ethnographic inscription, transcription, and ultimately description are all “intertextual, figurative, and historical all the way down” (Clifford 1990: 57) happens to be one of them, provided that what Clifford terms “the most ‘immediate’ perceptions” are understood to be likewise interdiscursive. The problem with turtles or any other totems lies in their apparent naturalness and natural boundaries. The theoretical representation of meaning should never have caught on quite so tenaciously to this particular image. Of course, whoever the supposed Indian cosmologist was, I like to think that “oh, it’s turtles all the way down” was just his way of dismissing a tiresome Englishman’s questions. The question is, would that invalidate the rhetorical figure?

philosophers can easily skip down to the “Pedagogy” section of the chapter. Ultimately, I describe individual difference as that which interpretive science cannot directly address. The approach to an experience of unshared difference will need to be oblique, which is to say, not surprisingly, artistic.

Hegel launches his phenomenology with the precise problem that will limit interpretive ethnography: on the one hand, the individual human is assumed to possess the ability to recognize objects of its desires as the first step toward being able to seek satisfaction of its basic needs; but the shared stuff of socialization has already prefigured the subject and the objects of “immediate” sense perception. Practice obtains within this dynamic loop. Thus, the theoretical groundwork is laid for the possibility of a being with a different body who is nevertheless taken up within normative practices of subject-object relations. This is the disabled body, which will be constituted less by a physical impairment than the dissociation of vital regions of efficacious self awareness. It cannot be encountered within the dialectics of need and recognition that was articulated by Hegel and which still stands behind anthropology’s Interpretive Turn.

In the essay by Ricoeur that sparks Geertz’s famous “read culture like a text” ruminations (Ricoeur 1979 [1971]), a basic functionalist assumption is built into Ricoeur’s idea of language, which in turn underwrites his idea of culture. Hermeneutic method operates upon a systematic plane of possible meaning, and what the method exposes is what he calls the “deep semantics,” not of authorial intent or psyche, but of the text as it is housed within a (linguistic) order of things. This methodological death of authorial intention effectively guarantees that any act will be potentially understandable (or misunderstandable, which amounts to the same thing) within the ocular framework of the interpreter/reader, so long as the text is recognizable as significantly a text in the first place. The aperture in the hermeneutic circle running between the methodical interpretive guess and its

confirmation is provided by the assumption that there can always be competing interpretations.⁴⁰

In this essay, Ricoeur has no concept of hegemony, much less dissociation: "It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them, and to seek for an agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach" (Ricoeur 1979 [1971]: 91). The historical development of interpretive anthropology demonstrates that the idea of hegemony is not incompatible with Ricoeur's version of the explanation/comprehension dialectic, but the hermeneutic framework, transposed to the provocation of resistance by hegemony, has seemed incapable of accounting for the first germination of the competing voice. Somehow, resistance is always first encountered as already being in practice within a community; or at the very least, individual resistive artistic acts are already expressed in an intelligible discourse that identifies them as resistance, even if only the ethnographer sees it for what it is. In every case, it's already potentially sharable as cultural knowledge, understood or misunderstood but in any event voiced. A method projected back from the theoretical endpoint of agreement—sharedness, identification—is not one predisposed to understand difference philosophically as that which cannot be shared.

In contrast to Ricoeur's death of the author, Gadamer remains committed to an idea of a truth that travels in nature, artifacts, and expressions, one that makes an authorial claim on us, one that the self-confirmatory movement of method will never fully grasp.⁴¹ Methods can

⁴⁰ Geertz (1973) here recognized the fruitful conjunction between Ricoeur's hermeneutic method and Gilbert Ryle's almost off-handed term thick description (Ryle 1971 [1968]). Today, anthropologists tend to use the phrase thick description in reference to thickly-described field experiences—laying it on thick—but Geertz's essay remains faithful to Ryle's idea of multi-layered, potentially competing interpretations. A text that enables competing readings from different perspectives offers a thick description.

⁴¹ Interpretive anthropology had already formed itself in the presence of Ricoeur before Gadamer's book appeared in English, but interpretive anthropologists validly recognized their culture-read-as-text object as a Gadamerian idea of meaning. Note, however, that Gadamer stresses the disjunction between the truth of understanding and empirical methods, whereas some ethnographers do not.

explain any surface, but comprehension relies on encountering (and in a sense acquiescing to) the horizon of meaning projected by the other. An image conveys his point more succinctly than a synopsis: “an ancient image of the gods that was not displayed in a temple as a work of art in order to give aesthetic, reflective pleasure, and is now on show in a museum, contains, in the way it stands before us today, the world of religious experience from which it came; the important consequence is that its world is still part of ours. It is the hermeneutic universe that embraces both” (Gadamer 1982 [1975]: xix). To “think historically,” as he often puts it, is never a trip into the past (or, by extension, the native point of view), but a critique of the other from within one’s own horizon, a critique dedicated ethically to surpassing that horizon by interpreting the other according to the claims it makes on one’s attention. One’s prejudices are the necessary horizon from which to interpret anything (p. 358). Hermeneutics, as a dialogical understanding that discloses aspects of the world beyond oneself, is a universal, continual, historically-situated process, and as such the dialectic of understanding is interminable.⁴² I will take up this approach to understanding in the next section under the rubric of ethics.

“Tradition,” however, remains an unproblematic, somewhat Herderian concept for Gadamer. There is no place, within philosophical hermeneutics, for a being that does not already project a horizon of meaning based on its tradition, its history of relations in the world. It has to be ready to make a claim, much as Ricoeur’s texts already have to receive competing interpretations. The object of the interpreting gaze has to be in possession of a tradition, and the tradition has to surpass the world of the interpreter, who can’t learn from a meaningless object (or one that has circulated into the field willy-nilly rather than being produced to satisfy a need).

⁴² Compare Deleuze’s idea of repetition (1994 [1968]), likewise inspired by Nietzsche. Gadamer’s disclosing/concealing dialectic was inspired by Heidegger, who had a profound influence on poststructural French philosophy, especially Derrida, who would remain at loggerheads with Gadamer over the centeredness of the horizon of meaning. Gadamer’s work did not appear in French translation for quite some time, however, and so hermeneutics would, for French poststructuralism, refer to Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of suspicion.

Both Gadamer's idea of tradition and Ricoeur's abstract idea of language (*langue*) conceive of "a culture" as a ball of relations, traditions, and adaptations held together by a strong centripetal force. The ordinary, meaning-bearing aspects of human interaction are captured by a hermeneutic approach to culture, because there is agreement on both sides that the "ethno" level of communicable behavior is an adequate basis for understanding a particular situation.⁴³ Interpretive anthropology largely accepted the presumed philosophical adequacy—perhaps even universality—of this horizon uncritically, however, when the ideas were transposed to ethnographic practice. The world of anthropology has turned out to be larger than that of philosophical hermeneutics. We did indeed need to surpass symbolic anthropology in order to de-reify culture.

I have argued that the observation of how semiotic systems "function" is a totalizing but not totally inclusive paradigm. Hermeneutics demonstrates that interpretation, as a condition of maintaining an interlocutory space and moving it along, always presses difference into the frameworks of functional systems. Put another way, understanding always presses particularity into normatively presupposing semiotic practices.⁴⁴ Conceived as a shared assemblage of semiotic resources, culture becomes what Crapanzano (1992) calls a guarantor of meaning. Culture further establishes the experiential

⁴³ "For in the broadest sense," write Keith Basso and Henry Selby (1976: 3) in introducing an early collection by several summit theorists in symbolic anthropology, "where does ethnography begin if not in a disciplined attempt to discover and describe the symbolic resources with which the members of a society conceptualize and interpret their experience? And why else, if not in an effort to gain access to these conceptualizations and interpretations, to grasp, however obliquely, the 'native point of view,' do we struggle with difficult languages, describe events we do not at first (and sometimes never) fully comprehend, and spend countless hours questioning native consultants about everything from plural suffixes to ancestor worship? Why indeed, if not to construct a theory of the way in which a particular version of being human—a particular culture—a particular system of symbols— confers order, coherence, and significance upon a people, their surroundings, and the workings of their universe."

⁴⁴ I.e., the indexical presuppositionality of referential language. Hermeneutics grants language priority over other communicative practices. The hinge of the present discussion is communicability rather than language per se, and so I will leave this assumption be without questioning the priority of language over music or other semiotic modalities, all of which in any case ultimately face the same problem of the incommunicability of radically unshared experience.

horizons within scope of the signifier as a negativity, an imaginative horizon (Iser 1993, Crapanzano 2004). This space surrounding the signifier constitutes the space of desire, encompassing (1) the object that the self can objectify in relation to its subjective need, (2) the illusion of wholeness as the reflecting self finds itself in possession of its own otherness (Crapanzano 1992: 89), and finally (3) the space that permits the play of interpretation necessary in order for the self to employ this illusion of wholeness for the purpose of perceptual consistency and coherence across contexts (Ewing 1990, Linde 1993). ...And that's a good thing. Without the space of desire opened by culture, reflexivity is not possible. All one would have in such a case would be the sameness of habit, without imagination or the territories that give shape to experience. Note, though, that a "guarantor of meaning" holds experience in its hand so that one side shows while the other remains in unsignified darkness, and we take the unknown side of this object uncritically on faith. The offer of a "guarantee" has for me a sinister ring, because what is dissociated in the reader's cultural "text"—that is, the difference which cannot be grounded on fundamentally transposable perspectives of self and other—will run as dissociation throughout its likely interpretations, short of extraordinary critique.

In the practice of interpretive science, itself observed as a social practice, I would note that anything particularistic that doesn't work within the cultural system under scrutiny, or which doesn't serve to correct the anthropological model such that the model does begin to account for the available data as a set, tends to drop out of the ethnographic field altogether, often as a "personal" rather than cultural phenomenon (has the excluded category of the personal endured in anthropology's otherwise anti-psychologistic climate because it shores up cultural models?). The ethnographic imaginary has great potential, owing to its heuristic generativity; but it is limited by the underlying mechanisms that predispose it to record the ethnos in its functionality—conflict, agreement, change, but in any event its communicability. I take this not as a problem to be fixed,

but an identification of the scope of the ethnographic project with which most practitioners ought to be comfortable. And so, an anthropological understanding of individual difference will not be ethnographic. It will fasten on anthropology's heuristic moment and develop it as critique instead of organized data collection.

ESCAPING THE DISABILITY CATEGORY

In terms of philosophical nuts and bolts, the dialectical movement at the heart of cultural critique can be distinguished from Hegelian dialectics in key respects. First, to be disabled is to be excommunicated from the dialectic of desire, and hence disabled from becoming the specifically self-sufficient, needs-satisfying, laboring consciousness required to enter into the master-slave dialectic. The presupposition that the socialized individual remains naturally able to recognize objects of desire at the level of basic needs carries over from Hegel into Marx, and thence implicitly to interpretive anthropology writ large, because it is the only apparent explanation for the origin of counter-hegemonic resistance. That is, the oppressed come to consciousness by collectively understanding their needs, most likely by watching each other's practices. For this reason, resistance is always discovered in the form of a shared minority practice. Second, although Bourdieu makes only passing references to Hegel, the structuralist synoptic diagrams temporalized and thereby dethroned through the theory of practice (e.g., gift exchanges aren't actually transacted "on the ground" as Mauss' metricalized system) are owed largely to the central place Levi-Strauss gives the Marxist forward-moving systematicity of dialectic (Levi-Strauss 1997 [1955]: 32, 49, 54-5, 504). The gift exchange as a system is sensible from the culminating standpoint of the survey of the gift and its return. Bourdieu shows the unifying gaze to be a product of practice rather than the Hegelian absolute elevation of knowledge. Practice expands the scope of the terms of both negativity and of synthesis geometrically beyond Hegel's determinate

negation and ultimate agreement. However, Bourdieu leaves intact the strong dialectic between the perspective of practice and the objective “inverted world” of theory, whereas I favor an idea of deconstruction that exercises the negativity of critique from within the game as an invested participant (an immanent critique). Cultural critique is a surface-ordinal process that finds differences critically through projecting the negative of the local scene combined with a synthesis with other ideas. Negativity is nothing mystical at all, nor is it the exclusive possession of an extra-ordinary theorist; it is a process of change often documented in speech play, for example (contrast the cultural coherence model of ethnography, which could scarcely grasp change as anything other than an external imposition).

Let me return to “my own” situation in order to now suggest why the issue of critique at times represents more than a fun “posty” alternative to the ostensible rigor of social science. The moment an observer authorizes an event as an experience “about” disability, the ethnographer defines the field in terms of a disabled population recognized on the basis of a quality—usually physiological—that will remain its bedrock definition, even though the ethnography will likely acknowledge that its meaning is culturally constructed. To identify the disabled as *ethnos* does far worse than just essentialize disability; it immediately deflects observation away from the pragmatic process the research wanted to apprehend, focusing instead on the population constructed out of the observed regularity. So long as the social construction of disability leaves the disabled as an intact population in sole possession of its defining quality, the product continues to reproduce the naturalization on which the initial field of observation was constructed. One has ceased to study the process of disability—the phenomenon of dys/ability, a phenomenon at the core of anthropological understanding—in favor of an ideological category, a content-bearing condition of the individual. New knowledge as a sort of friction is produced by making the round of this hermeneutic circle, but it will only be new knowledge about the condition of “the disabled” and so Disability Studies endures as a very regrettably

specialized, Balkanized, segregated topic, despite its best efforts to claim the attention of the sociological disciplines toward which it turns as a counterdiscipline.

The problem of interpretation occupied me from the start in terms of how sighted people interpret me and how I as a blind person interpret the world through ocular-centric habits learned and reinforced tacitly through social incorporation. Interpretation is always, to some degree, a disabling force that misreads a unique event according to familiar signs. Where the gap thus created becomes a problem to any perceptible degree at all, such a misunderstanding might be easily dealt with in conversation through a repair procedure: "Let me explain what I mean." When the crux of the difference runs beneath the level of common awareness and runs across a vast stretch of social terrain, it creates what we properly call a disabled person.⁴⁵

Misunderstandings are typically conceptualized as phenomena of discourse whereas disabilities are conceptualized as properties of bodies, but we can dismantle this essentialized dichotomy by acknowledging that what both conditions do, ultimately, is establish constraints on the horizon of interaction. As a force that limits agency, interpretation is the process through which culture itself oppresses difference.

At the same time, interpretation is the writerly pursuit in which one moves intentionally through and beyond the rim of the hermeneutic circle. Achieved competence for a blind person often hinges on an implicit interpretive science in which one has to extrapolate, from very inadequate data, the pertinent architectural features of an invisible, unspoken, unspeakable world taken for granted by the public. I suspect that the further one goes with this interrogative mode of interpretation without finally identifying self versus other or one's agreement with the other, the closer

⁴⁵ In anthropological usage, personhood is a social category conferring (somewhat naturalized) agency and identity upon the individual body (Mauss 1985 [1938], Harris 1989). As I discuss in many places, selfhood by contrast denotes a reflexive construct that becomes both the subject and the object of experience, often through narrative (Mead 1934, Linde 1993, Ochs and Kapps 1996).

one gets to, if not particularity itself, then at least an important realization about particularity. Somewhere along the way, the press of habit in a concrete world makes writing necessary in order to face oneself with the material of one's own concepts in order to carry the critique further. The dissertation certainly uses the page in this manner. It also occupies a place on the philosophical edge of a genre of disability writing. Although, can one call it a genre when each exemplar must invent its discourse from scratch as a solitary endeavor?

I am by training both a social observer and a psychological counselor. Yet for over two decades I have succeeded in hiding a piece of myself from my own view. Given the obviousness of my handicap, this has taken some doing (Irving Zola, *Missing Pieces*, 1982: 1-2).

I started to write this account each year for the past four, and each time the project foundered on an inability to look upon myself as both subject and object of my observations, to act simultaneously as author and chief protagonist, to be both ethnographer and informant. . . . This is . . . not my autobiography, but the history of the impact of a quite remarkable illness upon my status as a member of society, for it has visited upon me a disease of social relations no less real than the paralysis of the body (Robert Murphy, *The Body Silent*, 1987: 3-4).

In the [*Continents of Exile*] series, I explore many continents, real and imagined, that I have inhabited and from which I have been exiled, and also examine some of the things that I have come to understand about my personal history, things that, in many instances, I had no idea even existed before I began my self-exploration. In fact, my aim in *Continents* has been to take subjective experiences and put them into an objective framework and so avoid the pit falls of confessional writing. I know that I would not have been able to do that without the long, arduous journey, which, among other things, changed my attitude toward my blindness (Ved Mehta, *All For Love*, 2001: 2-3).

Early jazz and blues musicians would take apart a rhythmically flat-footed popular song, taking apart time and the rhythmic experience of time along the way, thereby seeming to bring about a fuller understanding of the song and of music itself. At least, that is how I experience improvisation.

Driving this syncopation of the beat and adjustment of the melody into the song became known as “playing a breakdown.” The above quotations articulate an authorial intent very common within the disability studies literature. An author’s discovery of this form of writing marks the moment when a social-structural breakdown begins instead to be played as a breakdown, a critical tool (and who ever really needed the French, anyway?). As I discuss in the next chapter, the fundamental building block of this heuristic, reflexive writing process virtually always involves juxtaposing accounts of disabling scenes with other, more conventionally understandable events. A contingent understanding obtains from this synthesis.⁴⁶ Authors reflexively write against inherited narrative scaffoldings of experience in order to generate new, productive experiences of themselves/ourselves.

As always, I stress the inappropriateness and inadequacy of a sociological account that, discovering this kind of “resistance” in expressive culture, takes it to be the sign of a functioning, agentive social body and thereupon leaves the field. Such a disengagement shrugs off the role of addressee through the usual “I’m just an observer” excuse—where anthropologists are no more or less apt to disengage than any other kind of bystander. To witness the critical process that generates the expression, on the other hand, fastens on that which can pass from the other to one’s self, pedagogically, a lovely danger. I suggest that the authors quoted above want such an audience, and want even more to become such a reader of their own text. I have discussed this kind of engagement as critique, and next I put critique at the center of ethical practice.

POWER AND INFERENCE

I find it personally too easy to fall back onto a Hobbsian notion of ethics and desire as two arrows at either end of a linear segment: I can do

⁴⁶ As a process of metaphor, this hermeneutic procedure compares with the “argument of images” characterized by Fernandez (1986: viii) as “the predication of one domain of experience upon another.”

what I want, or I can stop beating up my little sister. From this perspective, it makes sense that ethnographies should so often describe collectivities operating alternately through consensus or opposition, while ethics largely disappears from ethnography because it is either subsumed by the idea of cooperation or else it is perceived as an individual moral act committed against the logic of practice. I am beginning to understand ethics in a different way, however.

Whereas social science has been most familiar with the Marxist and Frankfurt School touting of dialectics as the path to a rational society, the dialectical structure of human understanding does not necessarily pose synthesis as a unifying state. Gadamer (1982 [1960]) writes of the fusion of horizons, but the horizons remain necessarily distinguishable like two conversational partners, an image developed further by Rorty (1979). In other words, difference has priority over sharedness, and agreement in any absolute sense is not the only imaginable goal. Synthesis, instead of being a unifying stage, is the vehicle that moves the dialectical process of understanding along, so long as any synthetic operations are carried out immanently (i.e., pragmatically) rather than as operations that lop off possibilities in the distinction of truth from falsity according invariably to some external standard. The first goal of critique, then, is the differentiation of component structures. Actual dialogue between two points of view remains the model of this encounter, while cultural critique as a single-authored scholarly instrument brings about differentiation intentionally through synthetic operations.⁴⁷ One very concrete product of ethical practice is the curb cut, a ramp from the sidewalk to the street negotiable by

⁴⁷ The process is describable as a Peircian phenomenology ([1867] CP1.545-559), such that qualities experienced as single-place predicates of a thing (firstness) are tracked by way of their dyadic exchangeability and combination with other things (secondness—this is the synthetic part) to yield an account of their social production as representations (thirdness), at which point, a thing having been decomposed into various constituents, the whole process can restart as what would be, from the original perspective, a subterranean exposition of any one of those building blocks whose firstness now becomes the object. This process thereby recovers the historical constructedness of ostensibly unitary object-expressions. This formulation should be carefully compared with that of Deleuze described below. Both put down deep roots in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

irrevocably different bodies. It is an inclusive social structure. The question of when and under what terms observers accept difference as making a relational claim on their own practice is the subject of ethics.

Foucault (e.g., 1971), Bourdieu (e.g., 1992), and Paul Rabinow (e.g., 1996) all demonstrate that projects to engineer a rational society are founded on the interests of particular powerful groups, while Henry Johnstone (1978 [1952, 1970]) and Steven Toulmin (1958) effectively regrounded the study of rhetoric as a textual anthropology through their demonstrations that philosophical arguments are conceived and communicated in the muck of social fields and not on a purely logical plane. And, again following Foucault, we know that we live our lives engulfed utterly in multiple fields of representation and knowledge, both of which are always the products of power. At the same time, as observed by Johnstone (1978 [1963]), to argue with someone implies that one's interlocutor stands outside one's effective control: argument is only necessary when you can't force belief. For knowledge and power to be always mutually constitutive, inference as a political tool must always be capable of being held independently by the other as the vehicle for hegemonic consent. Reason can be used strategically precisely because power and inference differ. In other words, power may be everywhere, but it can't be the only thing that matters. Argument as a speech genre can only exist through being sustained in a space distinguishable from politics. Ethos, as a legitimated field of knowledge, remains at risk in the encounter.

I use the term ethics in reference to the critical denaturalization or literal re-mediation of ethos brought about through the argumentative encounter with difference. Accordingly, ethical practice is the willingness to turn toward difference and attend the claims it makes on us. Ethics renders more orders of social relations possible, and does not refer to a code of ethical conduct—any such code is a historically particular expression of ethos, the origin of politics, not to be confused with the critical process that would generate such a code. Ethics is to value as poetics is, more narrowly, to

language. As a field of professional study, anthropology can opt to compartmentalize ethics as a topic; as a field of action, as in the influence anthropologists hope to have on students and readers and perhaps even natives, ethical conduct cannot be reduced to a set of guidelines.

The problem with using philosophical argument as a model for ethics, however, is laid bare in the rhetorical anatomy of an argument; namely, the idea of common ground. The grounds for making a proposition comprise a level of presupposition shared by both parties. The argument can only ever be resolved if there comes an answer to the question “on what grounds do we still disagree?” such that common ground is reached or else both parties reach the point where they don’t know what they think. The search for common ground belongs to an encounter with difference that seeks to subjugate difference, somehow proving that it doesn’t exist. “Underneath, we’re all just alike: Anglo middle-class heterosexual American individualist Christians who just grew up differently.” My experience of disability has prompted me to view the anatomy of philosophical argument with some despair. Every communicative effort aimed at re-engineering my social or physical environment that builds a bridge across one set of differences will, in the next context, collapse the ground below it, recursively, bottomlessly, into individual difference. Oppositional politics is not an adequate basis for a life when opposition can’t be contained within a field. What remains ethical in argument, though, is the suspension of argumentation over the descent into oppositional politics: both sides uphold a discourse in which they work to adopt the other’s frame of reference (this sounds better than “the native point of view”). I looked for a way to use this attentiveness that would make an end-run around shared knowledge, and found Gilles Deleuze branded as the philosopher of difference. Somehow, I don’t remember anything after that...

By way of a synthesis of several actively non-Hegelian thinkers, Deleuze’s *Repetition and Difference* (1994 [1968]) offers a systematic exploration of differentiation and the perception of difference. Difference in

itself is outside the Hegelian (and mainstream anthropological) dynamics of identity:

We tend to subordinate difference to identity in order to think it (from the point of view of the concept or the subject: for example, specific difference presupposes an identical concept in the form of a genus). We also have a tendency to subordinate it to resemblance (from the point of view of perception), to opposition (from the point of view of predicates), and to analogy (from the point of view of judgment). In other words, we do not think difference in itself (p. xv).

"All identities are only simulated," he continues, "produced as an optical 'effect' by the more profound game of difference and repetition. We propose to think difference in itself independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same, and the relation of different to different independently of those forms which make them pass through the negative" (p. xix; "negative" refers here to a determinate opposite).

The data by which we can ultimately encounter difference come from repetition. Once we recognize one "tick-tock" as a repetition of the last one, we have the material needed to take a short contemplative step: the two sounds sound identical, but yet they are recognized as two different instances. What's the difference, then? The answer brings about an encounter with time, which is only recorded as a simulacra on the clock face. Now, for as long as we listen to the clock, we experience the flow of time and the (eternal) return of both the repetition and difference. We might further come to reflect on the habit that has contracted "tick" and "tock" into a single case, such that we count these metronomic pulses instead of tracking two parallel series, ticks and tocks. Taking up Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Deleuze labels as "passive synthesis" the ordinary mode of contemplation of objects, wherein their identities are preconceived and their future instances prefigured. "Passive synthesis or contraction is essentially asymmetrical: it goes from the past to the future in the present, thus from

the particular to the general, thereby imparting direction to the arrow of time" (p. 71).

We ought perhaps to bear in mind here that only the present exists, even in theory; whereas the experience of passing time requires a contraction by way of identity, measuring the moments in terms of what stands out. Another way to put it would be that the subject is subject to the force of habitus, contracting the hermeneutic circle to press forward. Uncritical uses of the word reflexivity qua reflection are those that do not interrogate the historical, institutional, cultural, perceptual foundations that preconceive and prefigure the objects of reflection.⁴⁸ Deleuze writes of the identified "same" objects as displacements of a hidden process of repetition. He identifies four distinct processes of passive synthesis that define what we as humans can ordinarily encounter as "being": identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgment and resemblance in perception (p. 262).

"Active synthesis," by contrast, forms an intentional use of the passive syntheses. Memory and understanding are its processes, while its products are "ideas" in a philosophical sense of the word.⁴⁹ While representations congeal in practice, ideas are produced in an act of contemplation that, after recognizing repetitions and differences, goes on to draw out the threads of habit and expectation which ground one's ordinary acts of memory and contemplation. This process is therefore neither objective nor subjective, but reflexive. Whereas ordinary memory imagines a little self surveying the

⁴⁸ As discussed in chapter 1, the ethnographer's past and her sense impressions are often employed uncritically as authorities in this way.

⁴⁹ Kant uses the word "idea" to denote a concept generated by reason but to which there is no corresponding sensible, empirical reality. Immanent ideas belong to history, while transcendental ones, as the name implies, are the unconditional ideas that ground the plane of human experience, to which we only have theoretical access through dialectical reasoning as a "logic of illusion" (qtd. in Grier 2007). Anthropologists describing their positions as "post-Kantian" tend to be allying themselves with trends in 19th and 20th Century philosophy which took a baseball bat to the idea of the purely disinterested regulative exercise of reason, its goal of a unified knowledge, and to the bounded list of Categories into which Kant reasons every possible experience must fall. The danger would of course lie in dismissing Kant as a consequence, in effect assuming that an influential reading by a very few critics was a final, ahistorical, exhaustive, representative reading.

plane of one's experience, one creates an idea only by understanding the self as the product of practice and then imagining something new, something not already at the end of one's lens. Where Husserlian phenomenology and its anthropological legacy take the objects of perception to be cultural projections surrounding the sought-for essence of a shared world—the intersubjective ground—Deleuze outlines a phenomenology in which the perceiving subject apprehends objects that are projected by the field of other objects. The horizon doesn't extend from the focus, but locates it (pp. 281-2). This description accomplishes the unification of poststructural philosophy with linguistic pragmatics under the rubric of the dynamic relationship between text and context. Deleuze calls the plane containing reflexive ideas a virtuality, since philosophical ideas are neither ontologically real nor imaginary in the conventional senses.⁵⁰ Only as a virtuality, for example, can we think difference in itself; doing so is Deleuze's project, however, not mine. Mine is to use repetition and difference to think disability and agency.

The zany, self-indulgent world subsequently created by Deleuze and Guattari (1977 [1972]) further systematizes the distinction between passive and active syntheses, tracing their contributions to the fascist objectifying tendencies common to Freudianism and capitalism. Now the ordinary force of representation becomes portrayed through Kant's idea of disjunctive synthesis, by which perception identifies the parts of a system.⁵¹ a transcendental (and therefore in their view illegitimate) use of the disjunctive synthesis fetishizes objects, manifesting them as either/or expressions of pre-given foundations, disjoined from one another and dissociated from the processes of their production (capital and the Oedipal myth are examples). An immanent use of the disjunctive synthesis, as part of what they call

⁵⁰ Being influenced by Coole (2000), I tend to instead use the term "negativity" to denote this space of otherness, ripping it out of the hands of Hegel and the Frankfurt School.

⁵¹ The disjunctive synthesis belongs to one of Kant's many pre-Peircean triads. It sits alongside the categorical synthesis of a subject (identity) and the hypothetical synthesis that projects the members of a series. All three are logics by which we relate different objects to one another. In practice, as Deleuze seems to acknowledge, the disjunctive synthesis presupposes the ongoing operations of the other two.

schizoanalysis, instead tracks all the possible connections among all the constituents of objects in the field, thereby multiplying the potential objects that can be fashioned (74-5).⁵² The synthesis creates new objects—new virtual encounters with the Other, let's say—which remain sensitive to the ongoing, eternal disclosure of difference that will never be conquered by a regime of names. This break with the regime of language marks the freedom and the “constituent flight” of their theoretical schizo, for whom every step along his walk multiplies his creative power. Or, in some famous last words of Slim Pickens, “Yee-haw!” What Freudianism understands as a return of the repressed is instead affirmed as an eternal return of difference, a difference in oneself as a decentered subject responding to every new scene (cf. p. 20). The self as an assemblage desires to make new connections, and so the schizo is practicing a conjunctive synthesis by piloting its connections and disjunctions autonomously. For Deleuze and Guattari, following Nietzsche, this is the creative power of that almost-extinct breed, the philosopher who risks philosophizing openly before tenure review or still feels impelled to do so after: whatever one wills, will it in the form of an eternal return of difference, because that is creation. The role of the philosopher is to create ideas.

What joins the subjunctive synthesis to the foregoing discussion of the dialectic is the projection of negativity (virtuality), that sense of the actual-but-not-present, intertwined with the map of the known world. This continual projection of negativity remains, in their philosophical discussions, a matter of looking for aporia like any good philosopher. This point is vital: philosophical discussions of deconstruction or any other so-called poststructural mode of critique tend to be addressed to an audience

⁵² The synthetic movement is “the passage of a subject through all possible predicates. I am God I am not God, I am God I am Man: it is not a matter of a synthesis that would go beyond the negative disjunctions of the derived reality, in an original reality of Man-God, but rather of an inclusive disjunction that carries out the synthesis itself in drifting from one term to another and following the distance between terms. Nothing is primal” (Deleuze and Guattari 1977 [1972]: 77). Hence “there are no problems of meaning, but only of usage” (p. 77-8).

disciplinarily predisposed to be reflexive. Remediation of ethos is a non-natural mode of thought. Philosophers can identify a very abstract field, located on the page, where it will be practiced as a matter of discipline. Deleuze and Guattari never say what it is that sends the schizo out for his walk, other than a desire that suffuses the whole works as its energetics. For philosophers, the direction of that walk is a given. But for anthropologists, it isn't. Is the ethnographer's role to create ideas? The question can't be answered out of context.

Beyond the field of philosophy, we will need either a disability or another form of critical self-discipline to be prodded into ethical engagement with difference, especially in that field of action carried along with us, in which we always constitute fully-engaged participants (was it the onset of disability that made Deleuze set out on his final flight from his window instead of the door? I don't pretend to know, but on my walks I have run into many dead ends). When real human life is the subject, and not a formal idea of it, the encounter is either programmatically ethical or it is not, in precisely the same way that scientific observation programmatically sets out to control the predispositions of ordinary perception. If direction is left to the public, as when critique is posed as a personal stylistic alternative to empirical investigation, the shape of field relations—who is written in and who is written out—remains a voluntaristic attitude of openness, subject to one's own idea of one's own openness to those others one already tends to notice.

I hold that the value of the Deleuzian philosophy of difference lies in its ethics, not in its politics; because, read as a philosophy of affirmative action, it falls to the same corruptive powers of self-interested empiricism that fashion regimes in the first place. Three differently-shaped cellular machines stand on a plane.⁵³ Two present sides to one another that

⁵³ Guattari adopted the word "machine" in an effort to overcome ideological categories such as unitary objects or an essentialized self. They wrote during the height of Freudian psychoanalytics and before anthropology had begun to understand the self as a discursive trope. I frequently find it useful to bear in mind the world of the 1960s when coping with the

correspond and they lock together to form a new assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari call this operation “connective synthesis,” and it’s the stuff we’re made of. The third machine is dissociated. Three hundred machines stand on a plane. One, a schizoid, actively turns itself so that it presents a corresponding side to a neighboring machine (click!) and then another (squish!), revolving to connect with everything it can, the shape of each new assemblage always presenting fresh options within a madly-copulating box of blocks. What, then, dictates its gaze as it scans for new mates? And what other than privilege gave that precocious bumpy blue Lego the consciousness to exert a critical will? The desire that turns the procreative machine toward the other has no bearing on the movement of turning away from the one that remains dissociated.

At this point, the abstractness of their formal ontology gets in the way of understanding what is going on. A significant region of the plane referred to here lies in the virtuality of contemplation. Much of what the schizo takes such pleasure in is contemplative action, though Deleuze and Guattari assert that there is no boundary between a poetic revolution and a historical one. Hence, the product of the conjunctive synthesis can take the form of a more expansive semiotic awareness of the present, as well as social intercourse.⁵⁴ The turning-toward is therefore necessary, but the turning-away is unethical. It is not usefully described as political oppression, but as the ordinary scanning of a field that still assumes that one’s own point of view, if not one’s knowledge, is inclusive and exhaustive. On the other hand, as an anthropological domain, ethical activity can be observed in child rearing (where the explanation “they’ll take care of me when I’m old” is not

special uses of language Deleuze and Guattari invent, since the intervening years saw several parallel lines of poststructural scholarship that generated their own, now more familiar vocabularies.

⁵⁴ Stewart (2005) has perhaps gone the furthest in exploring the writerly potential of such a mobilized subject to apprehend cultural generativity—things that are not yet practices, but nevertheless have impacts that light up something new about culture in its ongoing process of constitution. I am, by contrast, theorizing from a subject that is mobility impaired; and, I think as a direct consequence, the present project does not address itself to the study of culture but the cultural study of dissociation.

adequate, especially in contemporary U.S. society) and many other areas of life. Most of this culturally-normative ethical practice is learned through socialized repetition. It does not operate against self interest, nor as a will to power over others, but as an often-derailed manifestation of an animal's will to act within a fully disclosed and trustworthy reality, and that world expands geometrically through the maintenance of good relations.

Theoretically, the remedial process of conjunctive synthesis, as an active synthesis, can redress the naturalized figure-to-ground discrimination that dissociates undesirables. But there is a missing element of self-discipline. Already, one might suspect that this road leads to an infinitely regressive scholarly practice, insofar as Reason must remain always practiced from some limited situated perspective. But self discipline is qualitatively different from both method and desire; and, in any event, the cases introduced by my stories illustrate that we needn't worry about what disciplines the discipline too much until the elephant is shooed out of the living room or else offered a beer, both of which first require one to see the elephant. I have found two very simple heuristic questions, neither of which can ever be posed well or often enough, that together programmatically participates in sharing the other's Burdon of the voice: "why do I think that?" and "what else might it mean?" The first opens the path of reflexivity and the second to cultural critique. A third question, "how does it work?" has already been mastered fairly programmatically by ethnography. Whenever I teach, I use these three questions in conjunction.

(PEDAGOGY) FOR AN ANTHROPOLOGY WITHOUT FIELDS

2004: My guide dog Adler and I enter through the open doors of the lecture hall and have made our way down the steps almost to the front before I realize that someone is already at the lectern talking. We pause, waiting in the wings. In a brisk, authoritarian voice she is saying something about exams sorted by students' electronic IDs, and she is saying it to the

desk as she arranges piles of bluebooks without looking up. I lean toward a baseball cap next to me and whisper "Is this us?"

The glistening, chewed end of a pen comes out of his mouth, but he doesn't turn his head as he whispers back, in a bemused tone, "Yeah. She's messed up." She is, or she has? She is. A hundred students and I and a dog watch, mesmerized, as she keeps talking. It's only polite not to interrupt someone until you're noticed.

At length, Adler licks his chops and dips his ears in a way I've come to interpret as "I like you seeing me." In the next moment, a hundred bluebooks come down on the desk with a thud like a dropping body. "It's the wrong room." Fluorescent light reflects off her glasses. She is looking up now, but is talking to herself. She sweeps up the exams, keys, her leather executive briefcase, and mutters as she clatters past me on her heels, but talking to the students. "And you all were [pause 0.5 sec] just going to [pause 1.3 sec] SIT there and let me go on until [unclear]."

"It's easy to do," I call after her. "All these rooms look alike." But she doesn't seem to hear me as she slams the door. Belatedly, I recognize that having a blind man say this might not make her feel better. She wasn't an anthropologist, but if it is possible for such an anthropologist to exist, I worry that she might be able to deliver a consummate professional talk about her life "in the field," where she was warmly adopted into a family of long-lost Easter Islanders who she still misses. If it were true, furthermore, it would bode worse.

Ethics cannot circulate the way specific knowledges do, in terms of free-standing facts and methods one can learn and then pack away as a toolkit. To elicit an ethical affirmation from the thinker in the context of reading does not teach the body how to respond ethically in emergent contexts of practice, because there might well be no recognition of oneself as playing out a scene's repetition. Without an additional regimenting force, one can agree in the context of reading that Haraway's cyborgs and companion species, Warner's and Sedgwick's abstracted queer, or the

schizos of Deleuze and Guattari are great, and still be unaware of what one is unaware of in one's own behavior. Those celebrated figures belong to the spectacular Marti Gras of Poststructuralism (and they are able to celebrate because they can practice an identity), but such figures are themselves at risk of reification, ironically enough. The ethical awareness that can be encoded in a text is still essentially ocular in the sense that the student must be primed to interpret new situations as instances of the relativistic encounter, just as habit primed them to preconceive and ignore it before.

By pedagogy, I refer to an intense and methodical critical scrutiny of what is in front of us. Pedagogy builds relations out of the present, and works not to displace those relationships into an abstract layer only expressed by the present people and artifacts. It is not a scientific attention, since empirical attentiveness collects data methodically; rather, we here find ourselves in the middle of a collection of odds and ends—a bricolage—and have to abductively sort out what kind of sense these sense data make. Various things are making claims on our attention, and for certain kinds of care; whereas the methods of scrutiny we employ can be more or less apt to orient toward these claims. Whether the scene will become one of ethical attention or else control is always going to remain uncertain, but it hinges on whether the interaction proceeds by disciplining ourselves within an encounter or disciplining the encounter to produce objects of study. The pedagogical process does not receive adequate attention within anthropology, but we know when the process has taken place by the palpable sense that someone in the room “gets it” amidst the huddle of slumped bodies trying to record the facts.

There are two usages of the word “scholarship,” one to grasp each of the two strands of the dialectic of understanding. Scholarship conceived as a commitment to the object of special knowledge—a Middle East Scholar, a National Merit Scholar, etc.—confers the right of authorship based on the authority achieved through distinctive mastery of the field. The professional scholar is profoundly attached to the object of scholarship, and yet

subjectively detached from it by a gaze that can recognize it as a bounded field of interest. During my first University years, I was taught a different idea of scholarship that claims to denote a commitment to the *search* for understanding, an acquiescence to learn from whatever is there (and especially from the archaic texts we as students were told to read, not surprisingly). This usage values the process and the attempt. It is more engaged with the passing world than with a selective object of intellectual-professional desire. We usually term it “intellectual curiosity,” though curiosity should be understood as itself an ethical exercise of a privileged position. The right of authorship is here conferred by the mandate to question things rather than to possess the answers. Bourdieu consistently reminds us that the Platonic etymology of scholarship accords with the first usage, since scholasticism is a reflective gaze withdrawn from the scene to a position of some critical distance or even indifference—an “institutionalized situation of studious leisure” (Bourdieu 1990b: 381; he was evidently reading my mail). The two orientations aren’t incompatible in practice. They cannot be untangled from one another, in fact, but I will continue to lionize a scholarly engagement with the world that remediates its own ethos and doesn’t choose its proper objects too selectively. In this regard, Malinowski helped inaugurate a powerful pedagogical component of ethnography, in that the best chance to overturn one’s research prospectus comes from asking questions and being led into questionable places.

Linguistics represents the flip-point between ethnography and pedagogy, because it professionally gives the ethnographer microphones for ears and cameras for eyes. Linguists cannot engage the present as linguists, how ever they might manage at the same time to engage as people. The linguist can only encounter the scene as data, which involves first living through the scene at the end of a lens, then removing oneself to a distant mechanized room called “the lab,” and there metabolizing the scene as data through transcription. On the other hand, the reading is intensive rather than extensive, and in fact is the most methodical, most intensive available

to ethnography today. Once a linguistic transcript is before us, we can work from every item we read, which is a reading very different from taking simply the content of the talk as a one-dimensional discourse “about” the World Bank or spirits or kin terms. A growing set of discourse-analytic methods intercedes between the text and our ordinary presupposing encounter with talk so as to permit the recording and reading of prosody, paralanguage, indexes to prior discourse, indexical incorporations of space, and let’s say optimistically that the list will always grow. A major reason linguistics remains so inaccessible to the uninitiated is this obsessive methodical attention to and technical labeling of apparently meaningless and unimportant details. However, the methodical reading is in itself an ethical one, because the set of methods legislates an inclusive mode of scanning—left to right, top to bottom, in and out. Each perceived structure is interrogated, listened to, considered, although interpretations ultimately come up against the backboard of analytical instruments and the proof procedure, unless the linguist is an uncommonly heuristic one.

Like rigorous empirical data collection, pedagogy is an intensive reading that turns toward each structure in the field, and has a protocol for resisting the urge to skip a step, while by contrast it remains presently engaged in order to correspond with those structures pluralistically—that is, things can be “interesting” beyond any single agenda and lead to new forms of action from agents in the field besides the analyst. Pedagogy isn’t quite the scene of research, then. The modulation from participant to observer does not apprehend the scene as a case study, but as a present interlocutory space, a conversation. The work of theory is applied to the present encounter, and so this is not participant-observation but observant participation. When the hyphen vanishes from participant-observation, the ethnographic field vanishes with it. This is how to not-do research as a critical mode of knowledge production.

The classroom isn’t just one special academic topic among others (and in fact a topic generally sidelined in the sciences), but is instead a regular,

accessible site of the encounter with difference. Difference is its *raison d'être*. For example, most who have taught a course dealing at all with American society have confronted the barrier that racism and racial disparities are “never” about the unmarked student who is hearing a lecture on race. I had asked my students to write down how they value people and how they thought their parents’ generation valued people at the same age, leaving blank the meaning of “value” except insofar as we had been talking about social hierarchy. Somehow, everyone mentioned race. All the White students (out of a total of 45), without exception, wrote that racism had been eliminated from American society as of their own generation, or soon would be. All the African-American, Asian, Latino, South and East Asian students, again without exception, wrote that racism remains endemic to American society and shows no signs of abating. When I latch onto the pattern and form their statements into data, then rummage through my bookshelves for something to think with on route to an explanation, I am functioning as an ethnographer. Here is what I came up with, by the way: an ideology of passive individualism (“It’s not connected to anything I do”) seems to combine with a reduction of race to racism (as a disavowed psychological attitude of active dislike and invidious discrimination), so that the racial history of material social disparity becomes invisible to members of dominant groups, whatever their skin color or lineage. Racial disparities endure because dominant groups reproduce the status quo, while racism continues to be generated as the product of an ocular assessment of this status quo psychologized as attributes driven into racialized individuals.⁵⁵ Observation of this particular closed circuit, among others, is precisely where my understanding of critique, ethics, and pedagogy has come from. Pedagogy, on the other hand, happens when I respond to an individual paper

⁵⁵ Even among race critics, it becomes too easy to misread evidence of the ubiquitous ongoing inertia of race history as a sign of “unconscious” psychological attitudes about racial groups, attributed ubiquitously by the critic to an individual based on the other’s racial category; which is not a critical perspective, for all that it might sometimes creep into the practice of “critical race theory.” The same confusion has manifested itself in “critical disability studies” as an offshoot of race and queer theory, as I describe in Chapter 4.

or ask a question to an individual student, then use that datum as the basis for a critical dialogue. This is what I can do to break the circuit.

Beyond selecting our texts, all we can do as pedagogs is compel students through a routine of work and interrogation in hopes that, from these formative years onward, an ethical practice of attending the claims being made on them will become a matter of course. Pedagogy is a form of regimentation that extends well beyond the grasp of coercion, and so it will always be at risk. There are good Socratic questions, such as “why do you think that?” or “what else might it mean?”; and bad questions like “Why won’t they listen better?” and (Pink Floyd nailed it with this one) “How can you have any pudding if you don’t eat your meat?” But the distinction between good and bad disciplining is not relative; or, if it only seems objective within my framework, I’m still ethically bound by it (across the board, ethics is that which has always kept cultural relativism from running amuck, though it hasn’t always succeeded).

The attentiveness to language practiced by the linguist is a far cry from the most common form of reading practiced in the public sphere as an entertainment or “info-tainment,” a fine line between recreation and reproduction. My students arrive with a well-developed protocol of reading in which they catch on primarily to familiar signs by which they can evaluate a text that agrees with them or else dismiss it as belonging to the other side. If only there were a manual, or perhaps a drug, or a torture device that would compel students to read arguments methodically, then our task as teachers would be lightened—or else we would have no task at all, perhaps. But any teacher has likely recognized that a rigorous mode of reading requires an ethical rather than enforceable engagement with the text suffering at students’ hands. I asked them to write a short piece on an experience that engaged them politically or prompted them for the first time to think of politics as something very local to them. A reading of the introduction to Dave Marsh’s *Fortunate Son* (Marsh 1985), about the impact of Smokey Robinson’s Black yet altogether human broadcasted voice

penetrating the historical and perceptual segregation of Marsh's White company town, delivered a payload of perhaps 90% of students grasping the fact that they, too, had all experienced the power of a song to recall very specific moments in their own lives, usually tied to someone they dated. Meanwhile, we had been reading Mary Douglas (2002 [1966]), as yet undiscussed in class. A depressing number of students extracted the words "pollution" and "dirty," which were confirmed to have a negative tang for Douglas, and I read several papers about the polluting acts of dirty politicians, including a triumphant reference to Bill Clinton and bodily fluids.

As tempting as it remains to foreclose on them with "they just don't get it," the moment is in fact a productive one that establishes what question they have put to the text, what they recognize in it, and in short who they are in the encounter. Students are, as rhetoricians say, "fishing for data" that will corroborate their perspectives on the world. An anthropological field appears. The display establishes the ground for our subsequent dialogue. The gap between the lectern and the regimented rows of desks is not an inert space across which Speaker A and Speaker B trade turns. The gap is infinitely productive within a communicative event. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics insisted on the productive use of prejudice: the fact that we perceive things according to biased values is what gives dialogue the leverage to begin interrogating our values in the first place. When miscommunications, assumptions, uncritical attitudes, slurs, arguments, and even silences enter the gap from any direction, they become part of the pedagogical collection from which our understanding of what is going on derives. As I move beyond a simple judgment of them against my own expectations, they become my ethnographic data about not just first-year students, but ordinary privilege. When I sponsor a rereading of the text and of themselves, much against the will of some, I am a pedagogue rather than an ethnographer; and yet the anthropological antennae don't go away in the way one might put away a camera.

I've spent more of my life in the classroom than in any other non-domestic space. Doubtless, I gravitated toward education, both in the sense of "liking" scholarly learning and taking it up as my vocation, because the classroom is such a controlled space. The precise trait that alienates many students granted me agency on a near-equal footing, a status almost unknown to me elsewhere. Movement is controlled and orderly. People are in predictable places. The built environment is not fluid. Communication is verbal and observes a turn-taking procedure. These are methods of pedagogical disciplining—not just setting up a sender-receiver relation, but a programmatic constraint to attend the topic—though we point only to the disciplining part when we so often use the evil regimenting of desks to introduce Foucault to freshmen. Especially as a disabled person, I tend on the contrary to encounter the much-celebrated freedom of the public sphere as a space of non-listening, non-methodical reading, a space that takes pleasure in being that way and in seeking only pleasurable connections.

To identify the structures that permit freedom of movement between one object of sustained attention to another, which is also to say the freedom to turn away from claims to our attention, is one way to establish the dimensions of privilege. If we think of the public sphere as a space comparatively free of the institutional constraints on attention and movement imposed by the market, the family, the State, or other institutions such as the classroom, then a few rough aspects of the claims to attention made by various media echo the foregoing image of non-analytical reading. A newspaper reader picks up the text, puts it down, scans the pages for something interesting. The radio listener, on the other hand, cannot skim. Listening is a one-dimensional attentiveness, and one can either attend or switch that particular signal off. Although we can spatialize that dimension as a linear text, that would be a somewhat deceptive representation of how we listen, which is solely as a function of time. So long as we in fact attend, time forces us to stand for a sequential listening. For this reason, I relate more to the conversational metaphor preferred by Gadamer and Rorty, over

the Derridian metaphors of writing and reading. One has to additionally turn text into discourse in a reading, whereas listening is already discursively situated.

Meanwhile, the World Wide Web, in which we are caught and which we ourselves have spun (to bend Weber and Geertz a bit), represents a newly constructed horizon of freedom. It provides the ability not only to turn it off, turn the channel, and scan for one's interest, but also provides for any such signal "on demand," which is currently such a marketing buzz word. Writing in 1994, Kadi (1999) observed astutely that, since information has no meaning of its own outside the context of a question prepared to use it, the Internet has a billion answers and no questions. And, we have defined ourselves...that is, we are constantly being defined in terms of...that knowledge we search for because it agrees with what we already know, in place of what could have been a more Socratic pride in learning to feel our way through the dark, untried spaces of what we don't know. Most presciently of all, Katie suggests that a degree of self awareness profoundly lacking in our society would be needed to make use of these billions of answers in any sense other than to twist the closure of the hermeneutic circle even tighter. One's attention is "on the go" in a way uneasily reminiscent of a Deleuzian schizo gone to seed. Like any text, the Web embodies a Jeckel and Hyde dynamism, depending on its use. "No one ever taught me how to ask a question," she muses. "I answered other people's questions, received a diploma, and now I have an education."

I think about power, inference, and how small the classroom really is each time I run out of food. I enlist the random grocery store employee, often barely-literate or else barely-arrived in a consumer society from a producing one, who I must follow around, willing him to scan the shelves more methodically, to read faster or more accurately, to understand that a grape is indeed a fruit but not a grapefruit, etc. This is perhaps a worst-case scenario, but I live through the worst more often than the best ("good help is sooo hard to find these days [sniff]"). "Bread" has, until recent weeks,

always had only one referent for him, and so the “bread aisle” is an Andy Warhol canvas reproducing a thousand images of sameness; he runs back to me with one of the breads. The achingly slow frustrating pace of our progress through the aisles and through these discourses is something over which I have no control, no matter how much terrible will I exercise in my space of mental agency. It is a pedagogical moment for both of us, since I cannot eat without him and he cannot be paid unless he does this job. Our journey, though, ultimately becomes a cybernetic exercise: “read me everything you see,” I say until the item is miraculously spotted within this sequence, whereas it was invisible before. Inevitably, I will forget to control one moment of my assistant’s movements (“check it for mold,” “what is the date?,” “what does the label say, precisely?”) and I will have a wrong or spoiled thing. Force is all there is, because he will virtually never be the same individual the next time I enter the same store. I can’t train anyone the way I would need to, one at a time. Purgatory: a no-learning zone.

I’ve argued that what we’ve learned from ethnography about how to attend difference is also useful outside ethnography. In particular, we already know that our training informs our everyday lives and our dialogues with students, despite the absence of recording devices or opportunities for systematic data collection. In our introductory cultural anthropology courses, we tend to want students to understand Trobriand Island yam exchanges as some kind of window onto their own habits of occupying the world. Yet ethnographic research will play a far lesser role in the lives of most students than will the practice of reading, and so the most effective courses incorporate ethnographies into an explicit pedagogy that promotes both reflexivity and cultural critique. The classroom is the field in which anthropologists spend most of their time, although “where do you do your work?” focuses attention elsewhere. Anthropology transits from the status of a profession to that of vocation when “anthropological thinking” becomes something we communicate to students by way of our practicing it the way we would have them do, which is to recognize a potential anthropological

field everywhere one looks, everywhere one goes. Pedagogy is an applied anthropology.

The dialectical movement that renders difference as an apparent relation to oneself cannot be bottled and distributed; it has to reproduce itself, and experiential data is its host. The relation only appears when it is inscribed, and so we have them write. Their transformation will seem miraculous, and we as teachers will wonder if we can take credit (often, we will take credit only for the knowledge transmission and miss the process of repetition in which we've been active). Critical thinking is an embodied discipline that precedes recognition of the scene. This is not the Foucaultian discipline of the prison or of research, both of which regiment their subjects. It is the Gadamerian discipline to use one's prejudices instrumentally, subjunctively. Step one is to encounter the collection making up the present in a way that is able to hear claims being made on one's attention. If I were a philosopher, I would be in a tangle over the idea of how to do such a thing from within the horizon of my own institutionalization. But the examples given above indicate that these claims are often out there in a fairly mundane way. Even in the most inaccessible extreme, it can be apprehended playfully through a negation of common sense. If that seems too abstract, then a good start is to ask somebody a question. Step two creates a discourse. The discourse of an anthropologist is likely to be much more thickly intertextual and cross-contextual than that of an eighteen-year-old, and so the anthropologist-pedagog hasn't given away the research store. Step three speaks this discourse into a space occupied by others, thereby adding to the collection, assuming anyone hears, and the process begins again.

Over the past twenty years, education theory has expressed a growing sense of urgency about critical thinking, precisely because the postmodern condition has made a survival skill out of the intentional navigation of multiple, conflicting, suspect, potentially harmful layers of information. Meanwhile, advanced capitalism feeds middle-class students' privileged sense

that everything they attend to is and ought to be a matter of personal choice, so that nothing need be coped with outside their interests. The anthropological literature invites a pedagogical application that addresses this problem very broadly and concretely. The patterns of exotic life recorded in ethnographies are necessary windows but aren't the object of pedagogy, since they are as frozen and disjoined from students as a television screen. Students' reflexive openness to forging an ethical relationship with difference is the thing. Pedagogy is the art of turning information into an active reading, which leads to the scene of new knowledge's return. Encounters will be recognized for their connections to what is already known, but ideally the particularity of them is met, their claims at least heard, thanks to a protocol of reading, one that is a far cry from a master narrative of unilinear progress in which successive generations of theorists are proven to have been wrong. The scene of anthropological learning is to a point held in common by the institutions of ethnography and education. It is also the scene—the only one, I suspect—in which the disability category regresses to the surface of individual difference, where it can be anticipated and incorporated by a public educated in a protocol for attending difference.

Scholarly disciplines are what discipline us to attend the claims new knowledge makes on us (even while an unfortunate side effect of being disciplined is to narrow one's field of attention). By contrast, there is nothing but law to impose accommodation to difference upon the public, and law doesn't govern the tacit orderliness sewn into the fabric of face-to-face interactions on the street, in relationships, or in a job interview. And so an accommodating public encounter with individual difference will be a function of ethics, not merely politics; and it will not be an ethics practiced only by virtue of a celebration of post-dualistic, post-scientific, post-modern sensibilities. It will spring from a critical pedagogy that encounters difference programmatically despite the absence of such voluntaristic attitudes (although more power to every ethically inspiring text, by all means).

Working from the pedagogy of blindness—not as a cultural object but as a diffuse field of crises—the dissertation attempts to help formalize our understanding of what it is like to attend life with antenna instead of lenses. Substantively, it is a trip through my education, the dialectical counterpart to my training. It is a scholarly text, but not an authoritative one.

CODA

One last question, intended as an entree to the next essay: is this a story about knowledge production or circulation?

My self education has demonstrably been a process of synthesizing ever-older knowledge, because, starting from the surface of my experience, every new discovery led me to something written in 1972 or 1939 or 1850, or else to a revelatory second reading of the anthropological canon, where the problematics of my discovery had already been explored; although this redux in itself may also have been responsible for making what had previously been an unintelligible text or third-hand reinterpretation of the idea legible for the first time in my second glance. I suspect that a good deal of philosophical learning takes this acculturative form. I read some Foucault, read some people who read him, I wrote, read what Foucault doubtless read, wrote, then read more Foucault and more criticism. Within this circulation, there's little chance of failing to rediscover the door through which one came in, at which point the worked-for "new knowledge" as an undiscovered country goes out the window: "Damn! That's what I was saying!" What is the game in which scholarly agreement sparks an expletive? How much of what we gloss as the production of "new knowledge" relies on the failure of institutional memory and the localization of communication? Still, the recognition of truth doesn't make the present an expression of something past, and much less an expression of someone else's idea—even Foucault's.

When we take an old book off our shelves and find the very language we are in the process of crafting, displayed there centuries before, we can

understand this phenomenon in one of two ways. If the knowledge has lain intact and dormant in our heads between our first reading and the writing, which somehow led us back to the book, we have to posit the unconscious as a storehouse and then fashion a causal argument about how that first forgotten reading caused everything we've thought since, now devalued as less-than-new. The best we can do at that point with what we've been writing is to call it "applied theory"—a derivative work grounded in Foucault or Marx, or even Derrida. The other explanation posits the text as something altogether livelier, such that discourses and syntheses never let the text be finished or finished with us: it remains present and, by way of the discourses that compose it, we read it by degrees in the present. New knowledge would then be about the synthesis and what one does with it.

Anthropology has no problems of knowledge production: new knowledge is in great supply, and demand is way, way low. The crisis is in its circulation. Maybe knowledge in circulation has the same reality as money in circulation. How does ordinary language circulate, and does its circulation determine the value of new knowledge? What is at stake for intellectual formations that proceed from an ideology of simple production versus circulation as a sort of textual pragmatics? A discipline that invests all its energies for the production of a subject who can say "I study them" produces texts that are necessarily displaced from the process of their application to both social suffering and the education of student bystanders, leaving pedagogy to be ideologically glossed as a personal interest or natural gift. The complementary mode of reflexive anthropology has no idea of knowledge for its own sake as the bifurcation between knowledge production and its distribution, but rather forms its practice on the basis of a particular usage, which is the generation of a subject that can speak about its own social production, its own suffering, and its own potentials. The stories I tell about myself are more than illustrations, and the essays as a whole are more than a published passage between my past and the reader's future. The ability to write the text by way of the tropes discovered in the writing process

constitutes the work of the text. I regret to say that most of my students gravitate toward facts instead of ideas, as do most of the people I encounter in the disabling public. "We have to do something!" cries the social scientist, hands waving in the air. "I know," his colleague replies, "but to whom?"

March 1, 2007: I know myself to be an apprentice player in a very old game. The first University course in anthropology, I suppose, must have been the one Kant began teaching in the Winter semester of 1772 and thereafter taught alongside his ethics course every year. His idea of anthropology was a holistic empirical study of the human being, intended as an antidote specifically against the introspective-rationalist psychologies of his day (e.g., Descartes). The products of these lectures were collected in the little book *Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point of View* in 1798. The lectures formed the basis of Foucault's complementary dissertation in 1961, and Arianna Bove has recently written a doctoral dissertation entitled "A Critical Ontology of the Present" incorporating unpublished portions of this commentary. Kantian anthropology was the pragmatic study of how people could live their lives in the presence of those questions that formed the basis of his three critiques: what must I know, what must I do, and what can I hope for? My students all want to know these things, and the three essays culminating here document my anthropological search for answers. We aren't in a replay of Kant's world, of course. Our discourse is very different, and our world is very different. Our ontology is different—or at least it is for many of us. I just discovered Kant's book today, incidentally, on the very last day of editing the dissertation. Just now, I'm deciding not to read any of the texts I mentioned. Beyond a certain point, historicization becomes its own specialized pursuit. I am already in possession of a pragmatic view of anthropology—like Kant's, it is a reflexive anthropology—which I have tracked far enough to identify this point of origin. I believe that when I open Kant's little book, I'll find my own, but in a more profound, more abstract discourse, formed around an almost unrecognizable set of topics and addressed to a very different audience (had I any sign of a fundamental

disagreement, I would have to read the book carefully before continuing). To speak the work of a text one hasn't read: this is the mark of an oceanic success of pedagogy. The fact that I have recovered this history as the product of years of counter-disciplinary research, meanwhile, indicates that we still need much more of it.

Chapter 5. Self Knowledge, from Circulation to Production

We finally discover the parking lot, a moonscape of potholes stashed behind the boarded-up Mrs. Baird's factory. The theater space has been reclaimed from one end of the building. I wouldn't want to be lost in this neighborhood at this time of night, and I wonder if I am here because one finds theater space where one can, or if it is because the performers are disabled. The sponsoring organization is called "Very Special Arts of Texas." Five minutes before show time, director Terry Galloway, a long-time successful performance artist, beer in hand, announces that they're running late because all the cast members got nervous and there's only one bathroom stall that's wheelchair accessible. When everyone accepts this in stride, she stomps her foot and says it was a joke.

The lights finally go down and carnival music comes up. The performers make their way to the stage on crutches, wheeling themselves or being helped by those who can walk, all of them wearing things like party hats or clown wigs. Many blow on party favors. Some are on hands and knees as they laboriously transfer themselves onto the stage and pull their chairs up after them, whereupon some perform feats of strength by lying onstage and lifting the wheelchair into the air. So begins "The Gimp Parade," this year's installment of the Actual Lives workshop that presents autobiographical sketches by disabled people. Few if any of the participants are otherwise artists in this medium—the show is about self expression, not artistic standards. The show is sold out. The friend with whom I came is about to reveal herself to be unprepared and uncomfortable. I am prepared, but will also be uncomfortable.

For the next two hours, the performers present scenes that stress their frustration with the chronic lack of understanding—frankly, the lack of recognition of their humanity—each of them faces, both in public and with

their familiars. A woman on crutches dances a fantasy in which everyone on stage mirrors her movements and her dependence on the crutch; then the dream collapses as everyone else drops their crutches and disappears, leaving her to hobble offstage alone. A woman in a wheelchair describes the importance of Depends in her daily life, since she cannot control her bowels. Depends are so important that she wants to make sure we all have them, so she throws stacks of them into the audience. Two men, likewise in wheelchairs, swap tips, one-liners, and stories about their sex lives, beginning with the fact that they have sex lives, have desires and partners, and going on to detail the techniques and technologies employed to bring things about.

Three men sit quietly on stage. When Galloway speaks into her microphone, I find her standing in the aisle near me. Although I can tell from her prosody, just barely, that she is deaf, she nails the overblown intonations of a game show host as she names the skit in a way that makes it clear the three men have traumatic brain injuries—something like “what are they thinking?” or “what’s my disability?” but I can’t remember. In her game show voice, she asks the kind of fascinated, possibly exoticizing or intrusive questions someone in public might ask. It’s hard to know what the shtick is, exactly, because the men take turns answering each question thoughtfully, without offense or irony. She chuckles *sota voce* after one answer, but again I can’t tell if the laugh is an attempt to frame the skit as a comedy, or if it’s a sort of private maternal appreciative witnessing of the honest way the cognitively-impaired performers calmly cope with their role as very public speakers.

I recognize the voice of one of them. He is the long-time friend of a friend, a former psychiatrist who lost a great deal in a car crash. Now living on disability income, he plays paint ball, speaks slowly with a slur, has a better and much more humorous perspective on life than any of those friends and former colleagues I know, cleared six figures on the stock market the year the .com bubble burst, and, nearly in panic, retreats to the bathroom to

escape the confusion of a noisy room whenever people try to talk to him for more than a few minutes. Here, though, we just see him in a chair, patiently thinking about thinking. I could be wrong about the voice, though I seldom am. I never managed to ask him afterwards if this performer had been him. Despite the performance being a public event, there is something so intimate and cathartic in it that I don't want to bring it up around his friends in that other context. But this is what I am thinking about during "What's My Disability?"

The sense of almost-recognition continues to cling as a deaf man takes the stage to tell us in sign about his own sex life. How does a blind man recognize a deaf man on stage? Either I'm forgetting other facts, or else it is just something ineffable in their shared comportment, and of course their deafness. I had been playing post-Irish-conjunto accordion in an improvised band at a party when a man, standing too close, tried to suspend his hands over the accordion's grills. When I was finally made to understand that this man with his outstretched arms was deafly enjoying the percussive vibrations, my acute discomfort shifted, from the embodied knowledge of an invisible, silent, too-close figure to an observer perspective on the scene of a blind and deaf man caught in a strange juxtaposition under a public gaze. I suppressed that unease, in turn, by mentally severing my interest from the whole idea of public evaluation, but the position in which one ceases to feel engaged with the evaluation of others makes for a lousy party experience, especially in a jam session. On stage now, the deaf man begins doing something else. I've had a Very Special Arts lady narrating the stage action through an earpiece. My companion could do this job and in an idiom that would be much more interpersonal, but I was curious to try the narration service. Only, the Very Special Arts lady has wandered off. My friend tells me the deaf man is miming, very graphically, several sex acts with an imagined deaf-blind girl. They do it with the lights on, naturally. The Very Special Arts lady returns when he finishes.

We are forced to confront their bodies in private, inappropriate, affronting ways—so long as we do confront them, which I take to be the point. However, this production for me has the shape of an anthropological problem. There is undeniable evidence that the performers seek to communicate their experiences of disability to the audience. It bears mention that participants have delivered some kind of draft to the Actual Lives staff, who then edit and shape it before returning it to them as “the script.” This circuit through the hands of others is nothing more than a graphic illustration of the dialogicality by which discourse “about” disability passes through a public formation—the history of which happens to be steeped in identity politics—before the discourse can be spoken by an individual. I suspect that performing the script to some degree moves the performer’s self awareness along in the direction of the discourse they now speak as they perform their own “actual” lives.

Additionally, I would suppose that the impulse to participate might belong to an ongoing process of individual accommodation to the experience of difference. If so, the Actual Lives performers stand publicly on the road to formulating their experiences of disability: they are working through and performatively working out self processes geared toward some efficacious understanding of their social realities, carving a space for difference between the medicalization of their bodies and their abduction by cultural stereotypes surrounding the horror, freakdom, spirituality, and transcendence associated with being radically different.⁵⁶ They do so in a social setting of immense acceptance of their conditions from other cast members, in a spirit of readiness to do violence to all the limiting norms that occupy the public.

On that night, they gave angry voice to the problem with “normal,” and their problem with normals (cf. Warner 1999). But did they address the

⁵⁶The performativity of disability has been discussed both in terms of disabled performances that act out against the oppression of difference and in terms of disability’s inherent performativity in everyday life (Kuppers 2003, Sandahl and Auslander 2005). These discussions have been inspired by Judith Butler’s considerable expansion of J. L. Austin’s concept of the performative utterance, especially as brought to bear on sexuality and the body (Butler 1993).

public? All of us, as friends, families, and familiars of those onstage, were in the audience precisely because the public being addressed never would be. My own discomfort was the feeling of being held captive and squeezed into this subject position. If, on the other hand, they allow themselves to see into the darkened theater, they are directing their performance to an audience of shills, a room filled entirely with complicit overhearers. Perhaps my discomfort arises from recognizing myself as the coerced transference object within their therapeutic monologues. Sitting in the darkness, I craved dialogue to fill the gap they opened, but that space was made rigid in the framework of spectator and performer. I told one of the producers later that the performance had made me uncomfortable. She was writing a dissertation that understood disability in terms of queer theory.⁵⁷ She laughed and said it was a good thing, without inquiring further. I wanted to ask them to stop throwing Depends at me.

CAN INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE ADDRESS A PUBLIC, OR ADDRESS ITSELF AT ALL?

Warner (2002) provides a discourse-centered framework for the study of the circulations that constitute publics. First and foremost, a public is constituted by its being addressed. A public is imagined by the broadcaster (a better term here than “speaker”), but, ordinarily, it manages to exist someplace as a social aggregate within earshot of the discourse. A public either attends, thereby becoming a public, or else disattends and remains a virtuality; therefore, a public is self-organized, but in actuality is always being generated within and against the frameworks of other institutions and actual discourses (p. 106). Aside from this single acknowledgment in

⁵⁷ Apparent parallels between queer identity and the affirmation of one’s difference as a disabled person have been widely noted (McRuer 2006), expressed in terms of the “coming out” of the disabled (Reeve 2002) and disability as “the other drag” (Mitchell 2001). “If we think disability as a different kind of drag,” write Breckenridge and Vogler (2001), with one heck of an unproblematic “if,” “a lively conversation may be made possible between queer and crip theorists.”

Warner's text, however, the study of public culture fastens on imaginaries as the units of analysis to comprehend publics in their virtuality: enter venerable faceless figures such as "the viewer," "the reader," or sometimes the culturally marked versions of each, such as Inuit versus Western audiences.

When interpretive anthropologists began to read cockfights like a text, they understood that this literary "possible reader" ought to be mediated at least by a culturally-emplotted reader, whose discourses are read as they the ethnographers read the observable field. Philosophy and literary criticism seem to link the structural text to its virtual interpretive horizon figured only as "the reader," and thereby tend to study the production of the text; whereas anthropology recognizes the text as discourse connected to a ready or at least willing speech community, prioritizing the so-called first-order interpretations interpreted by the ethnographer (notice how "a culture" mirrors the virtuality of a public). Neither paradigm studies the individual member of the public, who is left for the psychologists. The individual can correspond to the discourse or not, but neither the broadcast nor the cultural institution can correspond with them in a way that could work through individual differences. That move falls to local communicative exchanges as a matter of individual accommodation.

A public is always poised on the brink of a dialectic of recognition, by which I mean that the addressees can be abducted into the "we" or "I" or "you" or "everybody" of the discourse, even if one's sudden recognition of being addressed in one's own language comes as a surprise, because one is being personally addressed by a broadcast and finds oneself suddenly in a speech community among those who had been strangers. On the flip side, one can become acutely aware of being misaddressed or unaddressed by public culture. Many of my bi-cultural students want to write about this experience of slipping out of both cultures. For my part, I spent a few years tending to avoid music with lyrics, because I couldn't stand the pull to project a seeing self into the lyrical or cinematic world, knowing that I could never

actually embody this subject position except in terms radically different from the glue of eye contact and observation that grounds the sung dynamics of human relationships, aspirations, accomplishments, pleasure, freedom. To embody a song means to embody a discourse as part of a public, which in my case was a lie; and I lacked the translating machine that would allow me to hold onto my self while still relating to the experience of an other. This state of affairs could only come about as the mid-point of a process of accommodation, because only reflexivity could create the situation. The determined encounter with radical difference meant recognizing how thickly the discourses I was hearing on all fronts, interpersonal and public alike, were coded by exclusive elision and presumption. In Hegelian-Marxian terms, members of a public are already constituted as practical subjects of a dialectic of desire and laboring needs satisfaction, along with the concomitant formation of a dissociated region.

Although the virtual study of publics remains sound in its own terms, its relevance to individual difference hinges on the fact that at no point is circulation not passing through an actual social space, transacted as a communicative exchange. Warner is at pains to negate the dyadic speaker-listener model, but discourse pragmatics had already done so without abandoning the local interaction.⁵⁸ Without observation of the context of exchange, any idea of circulation will retreat to analysis of "the text" and describe how it works on the basis of projecting a virtual public it presumably knows or believes is out there. Criticism can therefore seem somewhat

⁵⁸ In discourse-pragmatics terms, for example, circulation is objectified as intertextuality (Silverstein and Urban 1996) and interdiscursivity (Silverstein 2004). The primary semiotic mechanisms of exchange by which individuals recognize themselves as in a sense participating inclusively and exclusively in a mass subject comprise forms of indexicality and iconicity that have long been argued to be fundamental to cultural dynamics. Mimesis (Taussig 1992, 1993) offers the discourse for apprehending self and/or generalized others in terms of certain qualities (see also Biddle 2002). Metonymy (Friedrich 1991) encodes the single-place predications of whatever/whoever, establishing the axis of syntactic and combinatory relations (coordinated with metaphoric exchanges among different fields). Dipping below the Peircian vocabulary, these operations make up Kant's categorical and disjunctive syntheses. Put more plainly, if reductively, the individual addressee has the experience of expressing the quality of representing that public, or has the experience of imitating and thereby joining it.

emptied of real-world consequences, except insofar as the critic can be observed to display her own actual, perhaps transformative reading.

Without the Bakhtinian loopy-loops of public circulation, on the other hand, discourse pragmatics would lack a vital fulcrum by which to identify forms of misaddress, overhearing (certainly a huge empirical category of mass media reception), and ideology. I would think that ideology can be glossed as the ghost of a public address system—an impalpable yet forceful communication that defines a group—although the study of public culture tends to focus on those circulations that cross-cut the workings of conventional social institutions. Nevertheless, culture circulates (Urban 2001). Mass production constitutes an important sociological underpinning of public broadcast. For example, as Hebdige (1991 [1979]) describes, mundane objects can constitute a subculture by acquiring a public-defining distinctive semantics in which objects at once constitute “a sinister presence - the presence of difference - and draw down upon themselves vague suspicions, uneasy laughter, ‘white and dumb rages’” and, within the counterpublic, “sources of value” (p. 3). Even if the first trend-setter displays only for a small population, the public is thereby formed and its subsequent reproduction set in motion. Word-of-mouth market researchers identify “twenty percenters” as those who somehow read the scene well enough to know how a new object or perverse use of an old one will be correctly recognized by strangers as a sign of hipness. The “buzz” spreads by local exchange, but it is the mass availability of the object that allows the public to constitute itself. Of course, few will understand themselves as consumers of a broadcast: they are all “expressing themselves.”

Hence, the virtual (circulation) and the actual (production) are dialogically bound. There is the sociologically-mappable circuit through which value courses which, when seen locally at any point, is a moment of production and reproduction (the Kula ring is the beginning and the end of anthropology, it seems). Circulation is the economic process in which distant products are imported and exported from a social field. The economic

metaphor here is obviously forced, but language and economics have both long been recognized as systems for the exchange among differing forms of value—esthetic, monetary, moral, and strategic.⁵⁹ Whereas the structure of a social field produces agency in the exchanges among subjects and objects, the wider circulation that brings distant subjects and objects into the field can only operate through the recognition of preconstituted value, and value within this virtual order is acculturated—it is learned through socialization, and its particular form is historical and arbitrary. These dynamics can be seen to impart the force of authority to particular incidents, interpretive judgments, little Hitlers in the making (ethos); while the same dynamics are employed to remediate them (ethics).

In Chapter 3, I related several scenes of my botched occupations of public space. My use of writing was deconstructive, or tried to be. I'll return to the accommodative and deconstructive use of disabling scenes momentarily, but want first to contrast that kind of reflexive writing with a more everyday discourse in which very similar scenes are employed "constructively," often in the process of identity formation. Bear in mind that identification enacts a categorical synthesis in which the individual is reduced to a set of qualities that characterize the group (the mathematical axiom is $a=b$). What I have termed a "scene" is actually a very common explicit observational unit of experience within any conversation where the topic is a perdurant crisis of experience. The scene functions as a quotidian version of the traumatic flashback, relived until it can be reworked into an understandable, productive, instructive resource for both remembering and

⁵⁹ The necessary groundwork for explicating my use of the word "ethos" is finally now on the page. The linkage between language and economy corresponds with Bourdieu's identification of economic, social, and cultural forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986), a formulation that derives directly from Levi-Strauss' understanding of what I am calling "ethos" as an ordering of values for the negotiable exchange of goods, people, and ideas (Levi-Strauss 1969). Within this perspective, value can be described as anything that stands at the end of a discriminating gaze. For example, the optical identification of a figure relies at the outset on distinctions among color values. Operating as a comparative logic, ethos renders intelligible a sentence like "John is taller than the grass is green." Every possible circuit functions as a system of differences. This idea builds a bridge between Wittgenstein's "the meaning is the use," which has had an almost mystical power to spark anthropological disputes; and a Marxian first principle, "the value is the use."

for future action. As we would expect, then, scenes of the sort discussed below are not uncommon when blind people talk to each other about blindness, as well as on e-mail lists in which blind people share their strategies (de Certeau would call them tactics) or, just as commonly, ask others for help formulating a strategy they can apply to a disabling scene. Scenes of disability circulate socially, then, painting the theatrical production described above as something like a revolutionary return of the repressed. Its force is that of a counter-public (Warner 2002).

We the blind and we the practice theorists are in agreement about the word "strategy", except that disability means one has to be aware of strategies like a theorist. The modulation from practice to theory is sparked by intense personal interest, and the meta-level strategizing awareness constitutes a doubled consciousness (Bourdieu would still distinguish this categorically from the objective perspective on the basis of our being immediately interested parties). What one does with the knowledge thus generated can follow several courses. Without question, the most common product of communication of this kind, which constructs a self-identified blind community, collects the common elements of the strategies together at the endpoint of a gaze often characterized as "sighted attitudes about the blind." I include the entire text of an e-mail posted to a blindness-related discussion list. The author first reports on a scene from personal experience, and then links it to a similar scene reported by someone else:

- [1] >I've been on a plane, waiting to be guided out, and the flight attendant did say something about the airline policy, suggesting I'd have to wait for assistance. I didn't want to make a scene, but
- [2] >when assistance came, it guided me off the plane, and on to a seat by the gate. At that point I was asked to wait, and some more assistance would eventually show up.

>

- [3] >Eventually never came, and I had a plane to catch, so I assisted myself to the next scheduled flight.
- >
- [4] >At that point I remembered a writing of Dr. Maurer's in which he described traveling in the airport.
- >
- >Here was the strategy used:
- >Sir, would you tell me which way to gate 15?
- >Well, if you just wait a moment, I'll have someone show you to it.
- >No, that's fine, sir, if you just tell me which way [one?] and...
- >Just a moment, and...
- [5] >At this point, blind traveler starts walking one way.
- >Sighted employee of airline says: No, no, sir you are going the wrong way!
- >Blind traveler turns around and goes the right way, now that he has the information he was looking for.
- >
- >Pretty clever.

Worth noting is the fact that the entire thread comprises a discussion about how to best navigate airports, with the universal consensus among the half dozen or so authors being that airline assistance was more trouble than it is worth. Blank-line separations aren't sentence-level or paragraph-level divisions, but seem instead to demarcate fields of narrative action, emphasizing that this assemblage has an analytical structure. The author begins (1) by giving the impression of a past event that might belong to a slew of such occasions ("I've been...") but switches in the next clause to the simple past of conventional experience narrative, where it remains until (4), the most incisive temporal event ("at that point"). The author is told to "wait

for assistance" at the end of (1), and the narrative begins to play with personhood by implicitly but intentionally misinterpreting Assistance as a person's name. In (2), Assistance (which has a neuter gender) arrives, does little, and promises in effect that its clone will do the rest "eventually." In (3), "eventually" is again read as a proper designation of time (even though it was already given as indirect reported speech and so probably was the author's own word choice), following which assistance becomes once more a kind of action as the author assists him- or herself. "Assistance" is therefore a pivotal character, one whose function and embodiment are at odds until they are both embodied by the author. The recounted story (4) floats within face-to-face dialogue, sticking to what amounts to a transcript, until (5) bodies begin to move. At that point, present-tense action marks the scene as an event suspended out of the specificity of someone's narrated past. This move is echoed in the way either "I" or "Dr. Moorer" (we can't tell if the author is quoting or reporting) becomes "Blind Traveler," opposed to "Airline Employee," fashioning the scene into a parable for daily life. The last line of the passage (and of the message) imparts the air of a sort of trickster tale, providing an evaluative component as to how such scenes are played.

A second example comes from *Sight Unseen* (Kleege 1999), a monograph exploring the author's experience of partial sightedness while at the same time often seeming to be addressed as a reproach to the sighted. Her rhetorical tropes implicitly suggest that (oppositional) identity formation remains much the same process for any socially marked population. "I know what it means to be sighted," she writes (p. 3), "because I live in a sighted world. The language I speak, the literature I read, the art I value, the history I learned in school, the architecture I inhabit, the appliances and conveyances I employ were all created by and for sighted people. I find it easy to imagine what it's like to be sighted. I had to write this book to learn what it means to be blind." She continues by noting that the book she is writing about her blindness "spirals around its subject in ever-smaller circles, because, while blindness is always before my eyes, it is hard to confront

head-on. The book as a whole can be taken as a sort of 'coming out' narrative, though one without fanfare or a specific time line."

She argues (and I agree) that disability autobiographies, because they are written as narratives, provide too much potential to be read as a spectacle of blindness as an object—an individually-owned quality—that the author overcomes by narrative's end. Her alternative is to write more abstractly about blindness rather than her life, as she puts it, and in doing so she fashions scenes of blindness that serve the purpose of forging an identity. For my part, I am far less interested in constructing a blind identity than in understanding where the need for such a thing arises and to what purpose one would put it, but the book as an object doesn't provide insight into that circuit. The parallels to my own work are obvious, and I find it instructive to dwell on Kleege's text for a bit to note some contrasts.

The net effect for Kleege's scenes is to record blindness as a set of rationally-adapted strategies that, through a sort of *et cetera* condition of a presented sequence, make up a normative way of life: "I turn the soft-shell crabs when they start to pop. I add flour to the pie dough when it feels too sticky. My mother, who was sighted, taught me to time vegetables by smell. When the broccoli begins to smell like broccoli, it's done. When it smells like cabbage, it has gone too long" (p. 27). The following serves to contrast her constructive use of scenes with my deconstructive usage. Again, the *et cetera* condition does the work of permanently qualifying her as a completed, well and adequately functional adapted being, though I would point out that we can also read into this series of scenes either a statement about the boundedness of her life or else the ideology behind the presentation of this finished actor:

Expectation plays a large role in what I perceive. I know what's on my desk because I put it there. If someone leaves me a surprise gift, it may take a few seconds to identify it, but how often does that happen? At home, at work, on the street, and in stores, museums, theaters, parking garages, airports, train stations, even unfamiliar cities, there is a finite number of objects that I am likely to encounter. I can recognize most

things through a quick process of elimination. And that process is only truly conscious on the rare occasions when the unexpected occurs, as when my cats carry objects out of context. A steel wool soap pad appears in the bath tub. I see it as a rusty, grayish blob. Though touch would probably tell me something, it can be risky to touch something you cannot identify some other way. I wait for it to move. When it doesn't, I sniff. It smells faintly metallic and vaguely soapy. Is it a massive hair clog the mind's eye regurgitated by the drain? This seems implausible. I think, "What is that?" and then, almost in the same moment, I come up with a better question, "What's it doing there?" and know the answer. // I once encountered a rabid raccoon on a sidewalk near my house. I learned what it was from a neighbor watching it from his screened porch. What I saw was an indistinct, grayish mass, low to the ground and rather round. It was too big to be a cat and the wrong shape to be a dog. Its gait was not only unfamiliar but unsteady. It zigzagged up the pavement. I moved my gaze around it as my brain formed a picture of a raccoon. The raccoon in my mind had the characteristic mask across its face, a sharply pointed nose, striped tail, brindled fur. Nothing in the hazy blob at my feet, no variations in color or refinements in form, corresponded with that image. Its position was wrong. The raccoon in my mind was standing up on its haunches, holding something in its front paws. And what does a rabid raccoon look like? Was it foaming at the mouth? // Without my neighbor's information I wouldn't have gone through this mental process. I could tell that it was an animal, and probably not a pet. That's all I needed to know to proceed with caution. But I still might have guessed it was a raccoon. In this part of the world there are only so many animals it could have been. Groundhog, woodchuck, raccoon, my brain would have proposed, but not sloth or koala. // But such unexpected encounters happen so rarely that they become anecdotes. In the normal course of events I encounter only those objects, animals, and people that I can predict I will. If I see them as wobbly shadows, or semi-translucent blobs, it hardly ever startles me. And the fact that I can distinguish one shadow from another is no miracle. I cannot see people's faces well enough to recognize them, but often I know them from their posture or gait. At the supermarket I distinguish the Cheerios from the Wheaties because one hazy blur is yellow and the other is orange. But in a way, you do this too (pp. 106-7).

This section of her book presents what Kleege calls a phenomenology of her vision, by which she means its immediate experience stripped of presuppositions. The result is something like a series of still lifes. Her

scenes of blind functionality almost always depict Kleege in solitary relation with a stable environment, rather than in a public. Mine would do the same, and would read very similarly. They are also quite often dehistoricized and present a general case of functionality rather than a particular instance. Even though her scenes and mine both use present tense, the stylized quality of these functional scenes can't be placed in time, and none but the raccoon scene incorporate interactions by which we can infer duration. Moreover, this particularistic encounter with the rabid raccoon is on the verge of dissolving, because the neighbor has interpreted the object for her; but she continues the scene in the subjunctive, what "would have" happened otherwise. The constructive use of scenes has collected and selected instances that then are represented as a unified icon of the system in its functional state. This becomes the story of her life, and certainly this ability to represent an experience of blindness serves a purpose, especially for self esteem, self defense, or other political arenas.

Her portrayals of sighted publics and the media, on the other hand, are not very forgiving, not very nuanced, and do indeed evidence a conviction that she knows what the sighted "are like." The following paragraph is indicative, not just of an essentialization, but of the painful history that prompts it:

When the sighted label the accomplishments of a blind person as "exceptional" or "overcompensating" they reveal their diminished expectations for life without sight, and a superstitious belief that should belong to another era. They seem to secretly suspect an unseen force prompting our responses, guiding our hands. Since they can see with their own eyes that there are no strings or mirrors, they are compelled to reinvent the ancient myths about compensatory powers, supersensory perception. The sixth sense, second sight, third eye. We are supposed to have both extra-accurate hearing and perfect pitch, more numerous and more acute tastebuds, a finer touch, a bloodhound's sense of smell. We allegedly possess an unfair advantage that we could use against the sighted, hearing the secrets in their sighs, smelling their fear. . . . The blind are either supernatural or subhuman, alien or animal. We are not only different but dangerous. But when we express any of this,

the sighted scoff: "Don't be silly. I can see you as you really are. You don't scare me. You're just being oversensitive."

Kleege and the author of the quoted e-mail both present outlooks on the sighted public based on a particular standpoint epistemology that is in keeping with a common discourse of "ablism" within disability studies as well as disability memoir. I can personally relate to both the emotional force of "you don't understand" and to the memory of many equivalent scenes that urge this interpretation. There are problems, however. First, the passage just quoted demonstrates amply how far an author can take sociological characterization in the direction of implicatures experienced as directly observable phenomena, to the point of putting words in the mouth of "the sighted" as a categorical subject, blurring the line between experience and hypothesis (compare the discussion of Behar in Chapter 2), while at the same time blurring the distinction between stereotyping and induction. The pragmatics of speaking-for-the-other vary, from occasions where a present other can repair misunderstandings within a dialogue to the rhetorical figuring of a group without present representatives, often for the purposes of enlisting an individual addressee's sympathies against this collective third party.

Kleege's trope of "sighted people" raises the unanswerable question of whether she is, by publishing the book, addressing the public or herself. In much the same procedure, Kleege and others frequently read mass-mediated stereotypes of the disabled as products and sources of popular stereotyped perceptions or beliefs about the disabled. Certainly, there is a semantics of disability present both in ordinary language and art. We are generally aware, however, of a space between Hollywood iconography and everyday life, and we have very few means, aside from highly localized probabilistic research, to draw any causal line between media and on-the-ground behaviors. Finally, experiential scenes of disablement are memorable because they stand out, not because they can be shown to be typical of any randomly chosen stretch of time, nor do we have any means to reliably say what

percentage of the population possesses the attitude of not-understanding, although something answering to this description is by no means rare.

The only coherent way to read “the sighted,” then—and, I think, to read Kleege herself—becomes to deconstruct her text as a document of experience rather than, as it purports to be, a “phenomenological” and “critical” presentation of both Kleege’s vision and sighted attitudes. The document came from someplace real, but the text is complexly performative. Kleege’s practical competence has been inferred from the affirmative side of generalized scenes and assigned to Kleege as a cross-contextual quality, while not-understanding has been abstracted from scenes to become negative attitudes of a public. It is a double displacement. In any particular encounter, both sides are understood as constative representatives of their respective categories, while the categories have been constituted on the basis of the same signs by which the scene has been identified. Public misunderstanding becomes an expression of the psychological attitude of a refusal, although what the public is refusing to understand apparently can only be expressed in the repetition of particular disabling scenes, which to me is telling. The catch here is not that the circuit is automatically fallacious, but that we have no basis, from within the circuit, for knowing whether it is structurally fallacious or contextually misapplied. If Kleege’s competence fails, or if the public momentarily understands, these anomalies generally lack the force to break in. A more powerful force for self determination would be a dialectical relation between Identity and non-identity.

We tend to take understanding to be a noun or else a transitive verb, although it is an active verb. The public hasn’t failed to be in possession of specific information, they (and often we the disabled) have failed to engage in understanding as a reflexive process that encounters truths in an interrogative mood. Standards become more disabling still when one applies them to oneself, as if there is a set of skills and technologies that one can practice in order to obliterate disability. The most disabling aspect of blindness for me has been the attempt to relate to a person who awaits some

set of strategies (hers or mine), technology, or knowledge that will overcome blindness once and for all, precisely in the manner one would fix a car so that one can just rely on it and forget about it. A system that occasionally breaks isn't treated as a working system. That is not a healthy ideology to apply, either to oneself or to a public. I know all the mobility skills. Yet I will always still stand on the street corner, trying to decide if the light has changed, rehearsing all the skills, listening to every shred of evidence and feeling for the rest, and still there are times when the data underdetermine my decision. There is noise from every side. Do I step into the street, or will it kill me?

The remainder of this chapter provides a rhetorical analysis of a single text which exemplifies uncommonly well the critical processes of self-knowledge production I have found regularly in critical memoirs by the disabled. Memoir demands attention to the dynamics of circulation and production of selfhood, because it is not only self-addressed by way of communicable discourse, but also addressed to a public it wants to teach. The reflexive potentials of writing helps foster an awareness of discourse as such in the process of wrestling with it to communicate individualistic experience. The written experience does not pre-exist the writing as a mental nugget; and so, if one can begin to direct the passage of oneself as subject through its predications (literally), a space of play opens up in which new self knowledge can be produced. This happens in the local exchange between oneself as writer and reader, by way of everything else one knows. Adding to the richness and relevance of the text at hand is the fact that its author was one of the architects of our current understanding of media reception. Hired to study the introduction of television within an Aboriginal community, Michaels (1990 [1987]) watched the Warlpiri watching Australian TV, and watched them watching each other with video cameras. He concluded that television, so often conceived in terms of a text being transmitted, was more profoundly the "invention" of the Warlpiri who were

interpreting it. He watched a lot of TV himself with this idea in mind while he was dying.

WILD REFLEXIVITY: THE AIDS DIARY OF ANTHROPOLOGIST ERIC MICHAELS⁶⁰

By the time Eric Michaels received his Ph.D. in 1982, he'd already been part of the Gay Movement in New York in the early seventies and lived in a Taos commune in the late 60s. When he was diagnosed with AIDS and upon the onset of symptoms, he began writing a diary. It does belong to a genre call the aids diary, but he is also exploring his dying as an anthropologist.

Ross Chambers (1998) provides a reader-response criticism approach to *Unbecoming* in company with other AIDS diaries. He is concerned with what the text means; that is, what a valid and skilled reading of the text might be, pointedly after the "death of the author." He reads it according to the image on the book's cover: Michaels, covered in KS lesions, sticking his lesioned tongue out at the camera. The diary as published literature, as Chambers views it, infects the reader with the task of being witness to AIDS as a process of unbecoming, and more deeply as a process by which "Straight" social institutions seek to extinguish all things that they find unbecoming, like Gay people with AIDS. This is a valid and sound reading of the text as a circulating discursive product addressed to a public, although by the same token it isn't a reading that adds much to what any of us are likely to get from Michaels' own plain-spoken and incisive critiques. I'm much more interested in a very different kind of reading centered on the diary as a process of writing addressed to the author himself. "What I've been writing now is in some more indulgent sense just for me, and because if I weren't writing, what would I be doing?" (Nov. 22, 1987). The AIDS diary is a complex genre, partaking both of the private discourse of a diary and the

⁶⁰ This material was originally presented in November 2006 at the American Anthropological Association meetings in San Jose, California. Thanks go to discussant Doug Foley, who knew Eric well while Eric was completing his doctorate at the University of Texas.

intent to say something coherent and cohesive to some public or other. Whether that public is conceived as a congenial or antagonistic one can often be a confusing issue. If Michaels wrote in order to indict or infect a too-Straight audience, then he would be addressing those least likely to open the book, and so his actual likely readership is placed in the position of overhearing his text. The text evidences an alternative set of circulatory dynamics, however. Michaels did edit his diary and wrote from a sense of public address, but not solely from that standpoint. I don't want to take the text as a finished structure in which different motifs, symbols, and themes all index one another as a system. Writing is more intriguing than that, in precisely the same way that Bourdieu talks about the practice of marriage as something much more suspenseful than filling in the structural blanks within a kinship system. Obviously, one can't read a text without reference to semantics. In a rhetorical or discourse-pragmatics reading, however, the horizon of possible meanings is at stake only as a means to understand the processes of production required to produce that horizon.

Literary texts don't have a conventional mechanism for time/date stamping their production, and so the telling appears instantaneous—so much so that even our reading loses track of time. Still, we aren't entirely without means to read the text pragmatically as a gradual process of self-constitution through discourse. Because the diary is (1) for the most part sequentially written as well as sequentially organized, (2) is generically constrained to in some sense report facts about experience, and (3) is a reflexive genre wherein the author is compelled to present himself—he being the focus of the only fixed field of observation constructed by the text—there is a certain amount of analytical space between the diary as a process of self-address versus a text object read by whatever public for what it “means.” Like a memoir, *Unbecoming* tends to report on the past according to the relevance it attains in the present. Generally, this means that the autobiography of a statesman, for example, will characterize the child as a statesman-to-be or in some other way embed the self within a discourse

appropriate and comprehensible to an intended readership. I've read Michaels' book numerous times cover to cover now, and strange to say I've never managed to think of it as an AIDS diary, nor has my understanding of his explorations hinged specifically on his being gay, except as part of the montage of his life or in passages where he critiques ideas of gay sexuality and identity. His role as critic remains much more up front. Despite the ability of a critic like Chambers to identify a text-system formed around an anti-oppressive raspberry by Michaels' gay tongue-wagging self, my assessment is that there are no stable discourses in this book, and any stability of the self obtains only as the product of the work of writing. The constitution of the text and of Michaels himself comes down to an irreducible set of inferential processes, each of which is trying to formulate a different kind of experience. The labels I've given to these processes are very exploratory and contingent. I've ordered them loosely according to how much of the interpretive work can potentially be done by ideology, versus the work Michaels and his readers are required to do against the grain of ordinary language and experience. Categorical synthesis, mimesis, abduction, and second-stories are very closely related, but distinct operations.⁶¹ My goal, then, is to replace a notion of diary-writing as a representation of private and interior "personal" experience with a processual understanding of the same scene of writing, in which efficacious self-understanding is constituted through its playful, experimental, subjunctive passages through another's discourse or the address of an other.

Categorical Synthesis

The term comes from Kant, and denotes the single-place predication of a subject as the token of a type; in other words, to "identify as" something (from a structural perspective, the operation can be glossed as metonymy,

⁶¹ This set of operations, two of which are mimetic (iconic) and two metonymic (indexical), represent, like Deleuze and Guattari's syntheses, a reconstruction of Kant's trio of syntheses but keyed to a contemporary world that is creative and pragmatic beyond reason.

but "synthesis" gets at the pragmatics of what it is doing in this case). Michaels is Gay, he is an anthropologist, an ex-hippy, White, an American in Australia, and he is dying, most immediately of cancer. He could take up any of these subject positions to launch an oppositional politics, but he does so only with the last, the role of victim of the hospital. All the other pre-fab identities will become grist for other forms of reflexivity. Put another way, State-level institutions, including the hospital and the immigration department, are forces of which he can be entirely critical without reserving a space in which to be critical of his own complicity.

The first entry (September 7, 1987) establishes the diary as a counternarrative: "I imagine that diary-keeping might serve to keep another set of definitions going against the quite barbaric ones that were inflicted in these last few days, through the rubber gloves, face masks, goggles, and an inventory of tropes assumed lately by medical practice to deal not so much with disease. . . but more evidently, no less, with sin and retribution."

In November (entry dated Nov. 5-20), he finds the metaphor for his institutional nemesis and delivers the most brilliant extended mini-essay in the diary. It concerns the word "tidy," which he always associated with child-speak but which is a "key term" in the Australian "cultural configuration, operating like the word 'fitness.'": "Tidiness is a process which, while avowedly in the service of cleanliness and health, in fact is only interested in obscuring all traces of history, of process, of past users, of the conditions of manufacture (the high high gloss)." I'll return to this diatribe, but suffice to say now that he has established one of the fundamental tasks of his work by constituting himself as the subject of institutional discourses that manage to be "tidy" in a profoundly sinister way.

I'll briefly note a few other sites of categorical synthesis, but these operate ideologically rather than critically. Identity often occupies discourse as the collapsed product of abductive reasoning. That is, the categorization is presupposed, the conditions of the identification being no longer available for scrutiny (Biddle 2002: 104ff). Categorization is also a matter of language

ideologies that frame X as a token of Y. The text indexes various registers or discourses in a very off-handed way, but of course what discourses do, precisely, is to fix the parameters for conjoining subjects and objects, which here means fixing selves and experiences in a cultural-explanatory framework, as Jane Hill (1995) and Kathryn Ewing (1990) have demonstrated.

On Feb. 16, prior to most such references, he reports that he is no longer able to “jerk off” and then launches into a critical review of his sexuality in which he argues that Gay promiscuity is a practice of identity reinforcement in which the sex act is “largely symbolic in its transfer of natural to cultural purposes.” “If I don’t now do any of these things, if I can’t even jerk off, to what extent can I be said to be gay?” Although the idea of Gay identity will constantly be under scrutiny, Michaels occasionally indexes himself in the feminine gender, either as “her” or in a feminine register, such as “getting dolled up,” “playing hostess,” or referring to himself as “forever female” when relating that he’d been watching a lot of Ginger Rogers movies. These indexes are out of the ordinary in his text, and so it may be telling that they track with entries in which he describes the gradual loss of any practice of sexual identity. His discourse asserts a feminine gendering with increasing frequency, even as his reflexivity questions his identity.

When Michaels writes forward—i.e., simply tries to describe experiences within a factual register rather than a self-interrogating one—recognizable ideologies tend to replace critique in providing the explanatory framework. One of the first things we learn about his past is that he had a “gutful of psychologizing” and that he claims to have been drawn to anthropology by its anti-psychologism (September 17). Even so, he continues to monitor his behaviors in terms of “pathology,” recalling a discourse from the height of ’60s Freudianism. After a mundane bit of traffic rudeness during which his cousin was the passenger in his car, he “wondered whether I should try and conceal my growing pathological bitterness, realizing it was already too late. I wondered how much I would look like my

monster mother at her horrible worst in that last decade of her spoiled, indulgent life" (December 29). At the very beginning of the diary, before the tidiness entry, and again at the end, psychologistic discourse asserts itself as the explanation of his past. Whenever he attempts to give an account of his past, causality creeps in, relying in his case often on psychologizing in terms of "pathologies," desires, and family—just the sorts of things he would have had ingrained as a (probably involuntary) client.

Finally, the text occasionally relies on stock religious allusions—e.g., "sin and retribution" in the previous quotation. He worries at one point about his brother Bible-bashing him (June 28), so this is a discourse from his family. Sometimes the religious discourse is a critical device, as when he decides, very late in the game, to shoot the cover photo, title the book *Unbecoming*, become a celebrity in a very small circuit of an AIDS diary's likely readership, let it be aggressive, and "throw the whole bucket of blood up, my anger transubstantiated" (June 26). All the other instances of Christian imagery, however, figure in dreams about his mother, as when he sees himself directing her and his sister to build a chapel while he lies on its alter. These come very late in the diary. At that point, his self-indexing as female becomes more frequent, and keeps company with ever-more juxtapositions of himself with his mother, as well as invocations of Freud. But by that point, his strength is almost gone and the text has changed, a point I'll return to. These revelations might mark the "ah ha!" moment of a too-typical psychoanalytic reading, but I find these aspects of the text rote (they return to the analyst exactly what the analytic instruments were designed to see) and to be at odds with the critical tension he creates when he is in possession of his writerly powers.

The categorical synthesis that positions pre-constituted identities, launches an oppositional politics, and expresses the subject ideologically is the least interesting form of reasoning in the diary. Identity politics enacts what Hegelianism identifies as determinate negation (e.g., negation of the hospital's subjugation, in spirit if not in fact). The other three mechanisms

I'll discuss enact a more complex and indeterminate kind of play in which meanings are deconstructed rather than diametrically opposed. Michaels thereby constitutes the self and society from a critical distance.

Mimesis

Mimetic relationships are achieved culturally, but are generally taken to be naturally-observable mirrorings of qualities, usually between particular people or objects. What passes from one object to the other is not just appearance, however; the power of the other passes into the hands of the signifier. The concept has been explored at length by Michael Taussig (1993), who follows close on the heels of Walter Benjamin. Among the examples Taussig provides are Kuna magical figurines carved in the form of European personages. Where categorical synthesis identifies X as a Y, mimesis is to "identify with" something or someone, which usually requires the perceiver to have specific and often poetically apprehended values in mind.

Mimesis is Michaels' mainstay of self-conception. He sees himself everywhere on television and in print. "I can't believe everybody doesn't have AIDS," he writes very early on (Sept. 17), and he scans people on TV for signs of AIDS. He fixes on flawed skin, at first suspiciously as he scrutinizes his pornography collection, while later he can only fantasize about flawed skin while "porcelain blondes" nauseate him. Describing his youth, he writes, "I lived my life on those covers of Life magazine which identified and named trendy locales, the 'in places,' those ephemeral sites created by the contradictory explosions and implosions of the birth and death of the global village." He speculates that his autobiography (which in some sense he is writing) would read like something from a fan magazine. Television, his professional critics (Warlpiri as well as academic), and anything else he scrutinizes very quickly leads to autobiographical reflections throughout the diary.

On December 27, he reports watching a lot of Ginger Rogers movies and thereupon indexes that activity by saying what a female he is, only to use the next sentence to begin reading himself into *The Singing Detective*—a good choice: it is the story of a bed-ridden, terminally ill, hallucinating mystery writer dreaming his way through his detective stories. “How, then, could it claim any audience at all? Who, and how many viewers would subject themselves to this? (How many fellow sufferers are out there?, I beg to ask as a viewer; which is the same question, I think, that the main character asks all the way through, in a manner so reflexive that this may prove the clue to the whole transgeneric mystery.)” Immediately thereafter, he ends the entry reporting that he is frustrated with the diary’s failure to succeed in the same reflexivity he perceives in *The Singing Detective*.

He is clearly aware and critical of his tendency to read himself from mass media, but never stops doing it; although he does not maintain this critical distance from the same procedure as he predicates himself upon the Warlpiri (A certain aboriginalism has in fact been noted in his academic work [Hodge 1990]). In November, he began assembling his will. The diary interprets his death and relationship to material goods by way of a comparison to Warlpiri death customs, in which the name and images of the deceased are “forbidden to the common lexicon, and proscribed in discourse”:

Not only did I feel required to take these prohibitions into account with respect to my writing and publishing, as well as the very interesting implications of literacy here, I discovered that the idea became very sensible to me. For some time I refused to look at pictures of Rick, or of my mother, after they died, except surreptitiously. And of course, this poses a particular problem for my own work, and my relationship to the community which is the subject of so much of my writing. This, along with the disclosures [of his AIDS], is one of those things I will have to muddle out, to produce in fact an analytic assessment of. My will, it seems, will be a position paper.

The images of his own dead, the images of the Warlpiri dead in his files, the name of AIDS secreted from his public image, and the prospect of his own

posthumous name and image are all seeking a balance through mimetic operations. The problematic will remain open for some time (although cf. the cover photo). Only when he looks over a newspaper editorial he's just written does he recognize that he has written from the standpoint of an Australian; in other words, seeing himself from the audience's perspective generates a reflexivity in which he recognizes the identification within his discourse. But he does not relinquish the mechanism. His response takes the form of his writing down what he imagined himself replying to a radio interviewer raising the question to him. And within that imagined response, he continues to identify with the Warlpiri: "As is true of so many here, I was not born in Australia; one has little choice in these matters. But it appears I will die here. My first teachers of Australianism, the old Warlpiri men of Yuendumu, believe that fact gives me certain rights here, which I am entitled to invoke."

Primates seem to be hard-wired to use one another as mirrors in which we see ourselves, and Michaels has his finger on the pulse of this process (to invoke a medical metaphor). It's worth drawing attention to the dialogism that has by now seeped onto the surface of the text. His discourse is "about" himself as an other, while at the same time marking the difference between the two. He formulates novel experiences of self through this radical recontextualization, and there is clearly more at stake in this procedure for him than artistic effect. Meanwhile, what written discourse provides that introspection can't is the inherent address of a public—language is never private. And so, to read oneself on the page is to figure oneself from the perspective of an other, which is simply to say that writing can become reflexive if the author creates a play of different discourses around the subject, which Michaels does. There are multiple layers of dialectics involved here, but the mechanics are fairly straight-forward.

Abduction

Charles Peirce identified abduction as a third form of syllogistic reasoning distinct from deduction and induction. This is the logic of the detective at the crime scene or the unsettled ethnographer, both of whom are confronted with a baffling scene that compels them to borrow or abduct a theory from elsewhere capable of explaining what is going on. The process is much-mystified; but, after all, the facility with theoretical frameworks is what repetition in education provides. The diary displays how creativity emerges from this procedure in conjunction with other mechanisms available to the writer. I would first mention his tidiness diatribe, which fixes the hospital as "one of those superbly rich sites of contradiction, sort of a Foucauldian holy ground on which multiple lines of discourse converge, like ley lines converge at Stonehenge." In the more concise passage below, Michaels deconstructs the life he led as part of a Taos commune in 1968. This self-critique, within the same entry as the Warlpiri passage quoted above, is sparked by the sight of the sparseness of his material goods as he sits in his apartment thinking about his will.

public articulations of collective hippy economics in the end totally obscured the actual material bases of the communes, the surplus economy on which they depended—inheritances by the children of Pittsburgh banking and steel families, generous allowances from families in Scarsdale and Great Neck, easily available welfare, and toward the end, fairly shocking mega-drug deals, media sellouts, and other tawdry dealings as the 1960s surplus economy dwindled and daddy took the T-Bird away. Second only to the failure to deal in any intelligent, appreciative way with feminism, this was the great disappointment to many of us as the radical movement of the 1960s turned belly-up and we saw exposed the economic bones which had underwritten all that rhetoric. . . I sleep up off the floor now, but on a futon (how that makes it all right has to do, I'm afraid, with a 1980s marketing strategy figured out by entrepreneurial ex-hippies and cleverly aimed at an ex-hippy market, and is designed to resist any closer analysis). . . I maintain here that the point of intersection which generates these similarities between my vaguely Marxist/Zen/hippy economic idiolect and a hunter-gatherer ideology is this

resistance to fixed notions of property ownership which is superseded by ideas of custodianship, utility, of "looking after": a processual model.

His ongoing dyadic identification with the Warlpiri seems to need some reinforcement, and here he employs explicit theorization to tie the story of his hippidom to the second story, his Warlpiri death. We go from the economics of the hippy movement, complete with an indexing of a 60s pop icon now reread for its Marxist implications (the t-bird), to a historicized 1980s mass marketing strategy in which he is complicit, to the sparseness of Warlpiri material life, with another, only semi-satirical index of 60s cultural exoticism (Zen) thrown in. Note the construction of a self-understanding that takes the map of Michaels' physical travels from Taos 1968 to Australia 1987 and transposes it to a value plane, yielding an ideological understanding of his literal and immediate context—his stuff. Henry Miller invented a very similar blurred genre (both were at some point sex-crazed, whatever that says), and I'm struck by the thought that there's no reason to suppose Michaels would have found this extremely powerful and productive register if he'd remained alive and writing at the behest of the Academy.

Second Stories

Harvey Sacks (1992b [1968]) coined this term to describe a particular relationship between the utterances of two conversational partners. Speaker A might report on seeing a wreck, and Speaker B replies by talking about being in an accident or, perhaps, about how news media fixates on accidents. Speaker B has undertaken an implicit procedure that drew out a set of significant qualities from A's story and then recalled a story that mirrors speaker A's experience within some particular framework. Telling the second story, moreover, asks Speaker A to recognize Speaker B's implicit procedure and, in doing so, hear the second story as a sequel to the first. The First speaker must listen for the logic by which the second speaker's story mirrors the first. So this generally automatic conversational response in which one

story leads to another one turns out to put the two partners in a fairly complex relationship in which each must be on the other's mind in order to verbally formulate one's own experience. Second stories are a dilation of mimesis, then, and work to negotiate contextually-contingent iconicities, as Peirce would call them.

The writer alone at his laptop tells both the first and the second story, and yet the role of the absent addressee remains constitutive according to much the same logic. As a composite structure, the second-story relationship gives up any pretense of being a simple reflection of a natural, extra-linguistic sequence of events, because the inferential work is constitutive of the text. In the diary, the iconicity is generally a matter of constituting a cross-contextual self and, often, a matter of generating a critical distance from which the affect of one story can be cast onto another. Insofar as Michaels assesses his text to be readable, it is on the basis of formulating the text under the constraint of addressing a generalized other; hence, Michaels' experience of himself within this operation—which in effect takes place on the page, and not pre-discursively in his head—returns to him in the perception of himself from an other's perspective (shades of Lacan waft silently by). Certainly, there are entries here that simply change topic without any legible productive dialectic between the two, but Michaels is too wily an anthropologist not to recognize and generally make use of the potentials for sympathetic magic afforded by such shifts. In the thirty or so memoirs I've studied, second story formations mark, without exception, the pivotal moment in which a critical experience of disability is first formulated.

The "tidy" disquisition moves through the following series of scenes: (1) sterile or contaminated wrapped hospital utensils, (2) a municipal tidiness contest in which one town bulldozed all its trees to tidy itself up, (3) utterly characterless "tidy" apartments shown by a Brisbane realtor, (4) antiques dealers who "tidy" up old furniture by removing all traces of use, and (5) the hospital, in which all dorsal surfaces are polished while those only visible to a prone patient include "the ceiling, paint cracked, peeling and falling into the

water jar,” and the underside of his bed table, “which hasn’t been swabbed since 1942.” The abductive theoretical construct of tidiness generates one story out of the next, interpreting them as unique repetitions, with the world of his observations as resource and his prone subjugation to the institution providing the occasion. The iconicity built up in each successive story ultimately delivers a force to the story of Michaels himself, suffering from the health care system.

Here is a more subtle example of second-stories:

December 24: [1] Hyperhumbug. [2] Terrible Monday came and went. The electricians put in the ceiling fan: estimate \$30; bill \$158. [3] A small gland in the pit of my stomach releases a previously unknown but now familiar hormone into my system. My hemoglobin drops another quarter point. T-cells face the firing squad. All my lesions buzz, hum, light up, and claim an other millimeter of flesh. [4] I try desperately to understand everything, in relation to me and everything else, to gauge my own paranoia, which, of course, is that paranoia's favorite holiday delicacy. [5] Dr. K. says my brain isn't shrinking at all, no sign of anything. [6] The newspaper reports that 65 percent Of HIV carriers (symptomatic or not) exhibit signs of dementia.

Following Sacks, I’m defining “a story” in terms not of plot, etc., but the interpretive work required for the audience to formulate an embodied experience—to “make sense” of reported events. The crux is between #2 and #3, marked by a shift in tense which, in context, signals the transition from #2’s diary-like report of his social life to his body’s internal life, metaphorized here as a social conflict parallel to, of all things, the ceiling fan people. #3 makes sense, I think, only on the basis that the present tense indexes #2 as just one instance of a repetitious scene whose outcome is #3 (on January 16, he will report that KS is “known to be stress-triggered”). The secondness rests in this side-slip, indexing something that isn’t a simple cause-effect relationship.

Despite its ironic stance toward medical discourse, #3 nevertheless inexorably comprehends the self through the discourse of the hospital, as I have found throughout cancer writing, while the Christmas allusion of #1

(the Christmas ghost of Baudrillard) seems to defend against the psychologistic discourse of #4 by indexing a setting in which he can gloss his fears ironically as a "holiday delicacy." The two dry reports, #5 returning medical results mentioned in a prior entry and #6 simply reading the newspaper, are legible by virtue of the self constructed by the preceding play, and it's a more "affective" scene for it. #6 implies that Michaels is once again reading himself into his reading of mass media. This string of jumps from one plane to another, then, sequentially navigates a very complex array of discourses, achieving a similarity among them in which the diary can present Michaels' self, to himself as much as to the reader, perhaps even conveying a level of terror that he can't or won't otherwise articulate. One thing that we know happens in the writing process generally is that juxtapositions will "feel right" before they make rational sense, following which the author massages the language until meaning emerges. It is the affect generated by a juxtaposition that potentiates any reading at all of the second-story formation.

The passage marks the end of a long raft of entries in which he reports scenes of helplessness against botched and antagonistic relations with carpet cleaners, his departmental faculty, the immigration service (which works to cancel his visa throughout the diary, and has done so by the final entry shortly before his death), and others. These very diary-like reports are paired with equally prosaic descriptions of his symptoms, and it is easy to miss the fact that the two classes of story gravitate toward one another in a significant way, accomplishing something unique through the repetition of their adjacency—a compulsive repetition, in fact, one entry after another. For example, the entry in which he questions the status of his gay identity actually begins with a report of his powerlessness against a neighbor blasting Rod Stuart at 11p.m. followed by ongoing threats to his faculty position: "I simply can't believe that they couldn't resolve everything and take good care of me if they were motivated, or simply competent." His already-noted inability to masturbate forms the second story to this dependency and social

lack of agency. Subsequently, he launches into a psychologistic reading of his childhood, followed by an abstract position statement on erotic desire as such, then gay identity as noted earlier, and finally yet another attempt to locate himself within his Warlpiri fieldwork, during which his sexual behaviors were curtailed:

I developed quite elaborate relationships with my video images. But over time, even this novelty wore off: Something curious happened also to my appearance; I stopped posing in mirrors or considering my cosmetology. I felt quite liberated in some sense, acknowledged that what mirrors were available was the community itself, and yet I was limited in my ability to read those mirrors. By the end of the fieldwork, my gay identity was problematized and backgrounded in ways I never could have imagined, let alone tolerated, five years before. It has made the transition to enforced celibacy easier. But if psychologists are right about the centrality and fixation of identity for the human self, what terrible psychic violence something like AIDS must wreak on most gays-and has perhaps done to me, although my analysis seems to offer a particular exemption for my case on this count, if only to rationalize and distance myself from the sad fact that I expect never again to engage in those caresses of the body which sustained and defined me for most of my adult life.

Had my first radium treatment today. Another few hours of medical bizarrerie. In this case, the therapy room had the same bucolic wall mural I had used to kitsch up my last flat. Fortunately, they asked me to close my eyes during treatment.

His critical stance falters as he tries unconvincingly to give himself an "exemption" from the deepest "havoc" of AIDS he has thus far disclosed. Even though we've returned to the site of tidiness, the secondness of the final story this time needn't even mention subjugation. But it's interesting that Michaels forges an irony—which is always an agency, a negation of structure—out of finding a piece of himself already there in the room before him.

The mirror in which he had been accustomed to seeing his reflection in others (and the sharedness of social practice always performs this function) has broken, exposing the dynamics of how agency is produced. From all the

mundane reports of symptoms and social hassles, a stable calculus ultimately emerges. His agency is directly proportionate to the ability of others to reason through a situation (bureaucracy being the opposite of reason) and inversely proportional to the amount of mobility demanded in a social field—although this is my formulation, not his. The idea of disability as such appears for the first time on February 28, and it is from a distance rather than in the midst of one of those scenes of dependency. After a dinner party, he describes each of the people he met and, reflexive as ever, notices how unusually “normal” it is. Disability enters almost as an aside: “Martyn, the book reviewer, was likewise engaging, and I’m astonished how quickly my condition and disabilities are forgotten in these lovely chatty encounters.” Two further second stories within the entry describe coffee with an ex-boyfriend with AIDS, where he comes away afraid of having depressed the other with his need to swap symptoms; and then a description of gay Marti Gras as an overwhelming display of the carnivalesque, although he didn’t have the energy to be part of it. “The crippled boy who couldn’t follow the piper. I’m sorry I couldn’t go to the ball. I’m sorry I turned into a pumpkin so soon. I’m sorry I don’t have a boyfriend, can’t even cruise, etc., etc. I’m not sure these sorrows are as unproductive as they seem, though.” As always, his self-presentation alights only after passing through a series of other stories, so many Bakhtinian loopy-loops, which indeed render even this rare moment of grief productive. In the next entry, he is so weak that he’s had to drag himself to the study to write; “But it’s not entirely unpleasant. Rather, it’s most curious to watch everything slow down, to become oddly dissociated from events, or their pace.” There are no subsequent second-story juxtapositions between symptoms and interpersonal conflict after this entry. That work is complete, and his condition is thereafter tracked in terms of his agency, as in this passage reporting on a trip to Sydney for the launch of his book:

The whole trip was really an awful effort. There were some fine occasions I couldn’t quite rise to, and opportunities for

socializing I didn't quite connect to. One of those efforts whose pleasures are delayed—perhaps like tourism? Surely a day spent at the new, and inhuman, Brisbane airport due to strikes in Sydney, getting misinformed, misdirected, and shuttled on and off planes like baggage didn't help. Then to return home (my little layer cake of agro) so I can go through it all again next day!

Conclusion

June 6: In his office I said, "It's getting nasty now. Can you get me out of this?" We both cried a bit, and he arranged to check me into hospital. I drove my car home, waited for the QuAC cleaner, told her what was happening. She straightened up, cleaned out the fridge, and so forth. I packed and grabbed a taxi to Wattlebrae. I reckoned I had a few days left, at best (or worst), and wasn't displeased with the timing, felt reasonably resolved, even satisfied. I would try to get Athol to print out the journal and get it to Paul. The letter to Gavin would be a good place to duck out, even.

The developing subjunctive mood in this entry is odd, seeming to indicate that he is already not just beyond but existentially outside the day being reported. He describes an end to the diary that was to be but now won't be. The writer has become the character's ghost—this is the feeling I get from the subsequent entries. I agree with Michaels that the diary's work ends here. What remains is an anticlimax. Reports on his activities soon lack the dynamics described above and become more matter-of-fact, and Michaels complains several times that the diary is properly over while his life drags on. Signs of this transduction of Michaels into his text begin to stand out a month earlier (May 1), when a confrontation in the hospital, now understood through the agency dynamics worked out earlier, ends: "My sarcasm, largely restrained until then, flooded the room and swept the entire nursing staff into the hall." The language is not just figurative, but performative; only in the world of the diary can the "sweeping" have the referent connoted here, an instrument for exercising real power over the

staff. No similar figure appears in earlier disease-related scenes, which instead concern helplessness. This isn't reflexive work, but a self in action and a fictive constitution of the world. Several excellent sociological critiques populate the final entries, but also the drive to "explain" his past psychologically and link his sexuality to his relationship with his mother—all the stuff of childhood analysis, I suspect—occupy the text for the first time since the initial exploratory entries.

By June 16, the writing has changed. The entry contains another reprise of the tidy hospital motif, but now the institution and the subject no longer have a relationship where anything is at stake, and so irony becomes Michaels' final podium. The hospital is now described off-handedly as "a Mexican prison, actually," and the idea of letting himself die, simply from lack of interest in this *dénouement*, he shrugs off as "unsporting." Five days later, he would joke to a friend that this final chapter would be called "As I Lay Dying...Again." By July 7, his brother, described as a "flawed mirror" of himself, has been asking all sorts of questions to understand their family, but Michaels just responds to what he's asked, no longer really interested.

"to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'," writes Benjamin (qtd. In Taussig 1993: 39). "It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger." Michaels' process of unbecoming never releases him from the obligation to conceptualize a self; or, at least, this is the tenacity Michaels as a theorist, an activist, and ultimately a writer never surrenders. He is a native-ethnographer caught in a situation of such radical displacement from society, his playing deck of identities, and his body that all the culturally-fabricated narrative conventions for formulating experience have to a great extent lapsed. Although I've only related the barest fraction of this text, I have identified four mechanisms of critical reasoning that simultaneously contextualize and entextualize the self. These are dialectical operations that, like the irony Michaels ladles over everything, negate the ostensible free-

standing solidity of structures, both discursive and institutional, in order to recover the process of production (or differentiation) within any established system of differences. This is what experience and selfhood must come down to when the fabric of culture itself precludes more conventional formulation of one's profoundly unshared experience.

As a thoroughly competent poststructural theorist himself, Michaels had little patience for the critic's tendency to deconstruct the world only to then leave the field without saving lives or ameliorating the human subject's material conditions. Similarly, we need to face the question of what all this self-work accomplished, since it in a sense only went along for the ride of his slow death. The writing could be accounted for as "palliative," as his physicians might say. First, however, his critical process disclosed the socially unincorporated knowledge of his own changing relationship to the world and, within that, himself. He didn't occupy a marked category, but was instead dissociated, and reflexivity at such times produces agency. The diary provides good evidence that he navigated the end of his life much more intentionally than might have been the case under a simple discourse of victimization, etc. Then there is the diary itself. The four poetic mechanisms of reflexivity have an almost magical quality, in retrospect, for the way Michaels used them to create a sort of spirit child. To say that he lives on in his diary is no cop-out: writers write, and through the production of the text he ultimately conducted the work of his life.

What brought me to the kind of reflexive literature represented by *Unbecoming* was my own mimetic attempt to read from these texts something that would help me formulate my own experience of blindness. That's the drama I'm reading into *Unbecoming*. What I read is a heuristic process of critical thinking "on the ground," outside Academe and beyond the exercise of research methods. Michaels is a thoroughly unsentimental writer for whom AIDS ultimately became a critical pedagogy for his own life and death. Finally, it is the refusal of the text to be contained within the

representational work as artifact that makes the reflexivity a practice we can observe in the wild.

The text is not valuable in itself. It has no powers of its own. The text is the residue. The object of observation here has been the birth of consciousness. Perhaps this acknowledgment differentiates between a purely rhetorical analysis and an anthropological one, although contemporary anthropology is apt to fasten on the text and find ways not to talk about individual consciousness. To trace one story line: theory inscribes memory, memory constitutes a self, the self projects action, and action constitutes the social field. Any material consequences that accrue to the man or his memory by way of the artifact's circulation, including the author's originary intent to publish, takes place in another sociological circuit. There is nothing more useless, more colonialist, repugnant, unethical, or moribund than an anthropological portrayal that finds oppressed natives muttering truth to power under their breaths, takes this as a sign of agency—in effect taking the sign for the thing itself—and then exits the field. But there is nothing more critical to human life than consciousness. A writer will exercise its productive power until the hour of death.

Chapter 6. Clinical Inferences: Some Reading Notes on Cognitive Science

Science can be distinguished from scientism by the latter's mistaking correlation for causation. When a statistical technique successfully accounts for observed variability, for example, the explaining variable might be taken to be the effective cause, whereupon several important aspects of context and interaction collapse. The causal principle, not being tied to these collapsed pragmatic factors, is transportable across contexts. The situations in which the correlation was observed become incidental, and the model becomes a free-standing truth factory. Sometimes an effect of the analytical machinery is mistaken for the cause of what the machinery produces, which is, for example, apparently what happened when Freud's structural model, derived from texts generated within a specific clinical interaction, was asserted to be the cause of all subsequent and prior texts emerging in and outside the clinical dialogue (Habermas 1972 [1968]: 245).

Because the behavioral sciences always implicate unobservable mental processes, they remain a site where scientism takes hold very readily. The mind becomes an object of the gaze (i.e., mind reading). Clinical psychology is especially at risk for the scientistic mistake because the clinic structurally isolates the individual from the interactional contexts in which self-knowledge, self-care, and the patient's discourses take shape. The clinic contracts the field of potential variables to something manageable, something recognizable within the literature, something reflected in the organism who stands before the clinician. Whether the clinic is deemed a necessary evil or a methodological virtue, it dissociates the individual from history and society except through mediations such as the analyst or the patient's way of playing the clinical language game.

The clinic can serve as just one exemplary expression of any kind of knowledge structure that functions to close the circuit in this way. Whereas

descriptions produced in terms of significant correlation continue to embody the conditions for remediating the machinery that gave rise to the scientific postulate, a causal model has instead to be “disproved.” Again, this procedure is made very difficult by the ineffability of behavioral phenomena, which cannot be reproduced under controlled conditions.

Geertz (1973: 26) notes that “clinical inference” is a documentary method of interpretation to which the ethnographer likewise appeals. A surface of signifiers is read symptomatically—for signs of peculiarity—and theory is used “to ferret out the unapparent import of things” (more on ferrets below). Although Geertz in effect uses clinical inference as a synonym for Charles Peirce’s concept of abduction and restricts its use to explanation, the scientific “observation” of mental activities will use a similar process to construct a predictive model, because the evident range of effects must always follow from the cause until the whole machinery is brought to a halt by some outside force, either in nature or in the clinic. Geertz wrote as if this “cognitivist fallacy” were something everyone with any sense already knew to avoid. However, dismissal has not proven to be an effective way to deal with the basic human tendency to turn one’s own value horizon into a state of nature. From within the circuit, no one understands themselves to be committing a fallacy, and so we’re faced with three ways to deal with such cultural assumptions. First is interruption by another discourse, which can either take the form of ethnography, supposed to change the understanding of the ethnographizing group; or Bourdieu’s sense of sociology as a “combat sport,” which seeks change in the ethnographized group. Second is dismissal, which tends to be what happens within professional communities who have to get on with each other in the close quarters of an academic department or even the comparatively small society of an anthropological subdiscipline. In other words, turn away into one’s own camp and attempt to maintain some basic level of discourse that communicates between groups “for the sake of the kids.” Third is an immanent critique practiced as a reflexive, phenomenological interrogation of one’s own assumptions, even

where this activity doesn't obviously move the research project along in the short term.

Below, I study three very different scientific observations of mental structures where the structures are taken to be at the root of the individual's interaction with the world. I am not critiquing the arguments on scientific grounds, nor am I convinced that all the examples mistake correlation for causality. I want to instead focus on what makes this mistake very possible in practice wherever scientists insist on leaving the philosophy of science to philosophers, history to the historians, or culture to the anthropologists—or when anthropologists leave individual minds to the psychologists. I am bothered by scientists who feel settled in their field and sure of what they know. Scientific knowledge production, valid or fallacious, displays the basic dissociative force of what goes without saying, which is a constituent of all knowledge production.

FROM EYE TO MIND

My first reading comes from Claudia Strauss' and Naomi Quinn's *A Cognitive Model of Cultural Meaning* (1997), which belongs to the tradition and close-knit professional community (D'Andrade 1995: xiv) of cognitive anthropology. They rely heavily on a connectionist variant of schema theory in which mental processing, roughly speaking, combines two related cognitive processes reminiscent of Jakobsonian linguistics: a very rapid, habit-like process of pattern-matching that draws inputs from parallel domains forms the basis for ordinary interpretation of scenes, while a serialological problem-solving process tackles more abstract situations (D'Andrade 1995: 138ff.). Behavior results from an array of distributed networks of schemas. Contrary to most linguistic-anthropological models, cognitivism asserts that these functions operate in the brain as a "model for" action rather than constituting observed patterns belonging to an analytical "model of" social practice. Whereas mainstream anthropology has sought to

understand culture and society on the basis of what can be observed more or less directly, Strauss and Quinn reground anthropology on the basis of inferences that use observations (of speech, in this case) to, as Quinn writes, “glean what people must have in mind in order to say the things they do” (Strauss and Quinn 1997: p. 140). The connectionist model adequately explains the behavioral data they examine. Although it is necessary to track the cognitivist model’s details, my goal is to describe a very particular faith in representation evidenced equally in the protocol by which they read theoretical texts and write them, as well as the methods by which they intuit the contents of minds and report them. My interest was sparked by how difficult it was for me to attend their arguments in detail in the face of an urge to dismiss them because of a conviction that, despite my initial optimism over discovering an anthropological literature about individual consciousness, something felt deeply wrong to me about the book’s presuppositions and its preoccupation with defending their position as true and others as false (most theorists don’t understand their activity this way).

The word “schema” refers to a mental structure such as marriage or door-opening as an action sequence.⁶² D’Andrade (1995: 132) notes in passing that there are “as many kinds of schemas as there are kinds of things”; which is a very important point, because we can either think of the identification of schemas as positing them analytically or, otherwise, to be labeling extant observable structures. Strauss and Quinn insist on the latter, so that the brain must be really very full of these different “things.”⁶³ Their argument makes use of a purely referential ideology of language in which

⁶² The word “schema” can be traced to Kant. Its introduction to psychology is owed to Bartlett (1932), who argued for the social grounding of individual memory. It is a concept that can be developed either as a theory of mental structures or of practice (cf. Chapter 2, scene ix).

⁶³ In Gulliver’s third journey—the one to the floating island of La Puta, populated by scientists—Jonathan Swift seems to suggest what a world would look like in which everyone communicated based on a stock of representations they have to carry around as their personal luggage. Meanwhile, interpretivists (whoever they/we are, really) would not deny that we have mental schemas, but would suppose them to exist as a set of learned relationships instead of an assortment of objects, beliefs, etc. “Thinking” and “interpreting,” under interpretivism, might be more a matter of living through qualitatively new situations in a way that reconstitutes the past rather than recalling the past and then adapting it to the present.

words index and therefore provide evidence of a priori things—a paradigm entirely implicit in their work, since they explicitly defer consideration of public interactional aspects of culture. Meanings are “retrieved” (p. 156). So long as people observably say what they mean to say, they must always mean what they say they mean.

They define meaning as “the interpretation evoked in a person by an object or event at a given time,” (p. 6). The definition in itself in no way elides interaction; but, in the context of their model, interpretation is decidedly no longer the metasemiotic process attended to by hermeneutic philosophy, in which meaning is “a function of the sign and is therefore inconceivable (since meaning is pure relation, or function) outside the sign as some particular, independently existing thing” (Volosinov 1973 [1930]: 28). Cognitivist meaning is instead a sort of hidden nexus that generates behavioral outputs from a set of cognitive-affective inputs.⁶⁴ Meanings and interpretations are “the thoughts, feelings, and less conscious associations evoked when people's schemas meet the world at a given moment” (p. 52). They “are the product of current events in the public world interacting with mental structures, which are in turn the product of previous such interactions with the public world” (p. 7). Meanings are momentary states, then, that occupy space in the brain (they possess mass); but “The relative stability of the world and our schemas has the effect that both in a given person and in a group of people who share a way of life, more or less the same meanings arise over and over” (p. 7). They define culture, accordingly, as “the shared cognitive-emotional state that results when the mental structures of a group of people respond to typical objects and events in their world” (p. 15). Quinn writes, “We may imagine that cultural models incorporate just those cultural exemplars that prove natural and helpful to many people in thinking analogically about a given domain of experience” (p. 155).

⁶⁴ In the interpretivist tradition, incidentally, affect is not in itself meaningful, but only becomes meaningful as emotion on the heels of affect's semiotic incorporation.

Most fundamentally, they argue that the decisions, interpretations, and actions of individuals cannot be adequately derived from studies of public culture (this argument will be examined below). Therefore, individual cognitive processes exist as an order of dynamics different from the dynamics of "messages and practices." Insofar as embodiment and interpretation require bodies and minds, this claim stands behind interpretivist assumptions as well, although they will take it a bit further after positing a permeable boundary between the two (p. 8). They conclude that "both intrapersonal and extrapersonal processes are needed to make a whole theory of culture. Our account is a necessary part of any such theory" (p. 253). Finally, they quote a passage from Geertz which, in quintessential fashion, almost but not quite off-handedly dismisses cognitive anthropology. Writing before the advent of the connectionist model, his target is the idea that psychic structures in themselves account for culture, which he attacks through citation of Goodenough's classic definition of culture as that which "consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members." Strauss and Quinn take him to be attacking the idea of internalization, but this concept appears neither in the quoted passage nor the Goodenough quote quoted in the Geertz passage they quote. The point that Geertz does make quite strongly, but on which they do not comment anywhere in the book, is the question of "whether particular analyses . . . reflect what the natives 'really' think or are merely clever simulations, logically equivalent but substantively different, of what they think" (Geertz 1973:11).

One of the constitutive characteristics of a community, much less a close knit one, is the sharing of certain forms of knowledge and approaches to knowledge over and against those of an identifiable out-group. Another characteristic is that these shared schemas don't have occasion to retain the status of proper objects of critical inquiry. For some members of the group, an attempt to communicate peaceably to the Other will tend to sharpen commitment to one's own knowledge by way of a communicative style

focused on refuting the Other's perspective ("let me prove to you why you're wrong."). There will be an underlying warrant, which seldom itself appears in the argument and which may even have long since ceased to be explicitly shared within the in-group—it may even not be so widely shared, but only becomes a likely product of the socialization process once the community's discourse is well settled. These are dynamics of every community, so far as I know. In the argument levied by Strauss and Quinn [...a Freudian slip in my word choice there], there comes a tipping point where the widely-acceptable and useful model of schema theory begins to close off avenues of thought leading in other directions, narrowing the field of potential objects of analytical observation. That point arrives when the confirmation of theory through research is used to make a positive inductive assertion about reality—the assertion that meanings exist as psychic structures—whereupon the field of possible observations will henceforth be implicitly the product of that framework, tending to confirm it and becoming a ground against which other positions appear nonsensical. I read their argument as an instance of this process, and the process itself is the phenomenon that I want to understand.

The book's organization is telling. The first presented application of their cognitive model, on page 87, employs a fictional composite person, herself dealt with very sporadically. Discussions of research begin on page 137. This arrangement underscores the nature of the anthropological project in their assessment: to build an accurate model (in the singular) of the human world (again singular, certainly) capable of reliably describing how individuals construct models for action and thereby generate culture. Although we can easily suppose that their prior research adequately supports their model, the book's organization entirely subordinates the construction of the model to its prefatory presentation as a free-standing true representation. Virtually none of the claims grounded in their presented case studies rely for their validity or soundness on either the rejection of other theories or the objective truth of the cognitive model, and yet they spend the

first forty-eight pages refuting various strictly outdoor psychologies. The rightness of the abstract model emerges de facto against the negation of other positions. Specifically, they are at pains to locate themselves in partial opposition to "Geertzian and neo-Geertzian interpretivists, Foucauldian poststructuralists and other postmodernists, some contemporary historical materialists, and those cognitive and linguistic anthropologists who study cognition in practice (or discourse pragmatics)" (p. 12), all of whom they consider to be in significant aspects "inconsistent" (p. 19), "confused," (p. 20), or "not confused, just wrong" (p. 33). They address recent theories of meaning, which they suppose most cultural anthropologists to hold, as follows:

We reject all three of the current meaning-is-use, meaning-is-place-in-a-system-of-signs, and meanings-are-endlessly-deferred approaches. . . . Meaning-as-use pretends that people act without having anything in mind. Meaning-as-emerging-from-a-system-of-signs assigns a reality to these abstract systems that they do not have. Finally, meanings-as-endlessly-deferred delights in the ceaseless play of signs, forgetting that in the meantime people need some meanings to get them through the day. Instead, our definition combines aspects of earlier behaviorist (meanings are defined by their stimuli and responses) and ideational (meanings are ideas in people's heads) approaches (p. 5).

That their correctives to so many major trends in 20th Century social theory can be done adequately within forty-eight pages (which nevertheless seems like a lot while reading) relies on their ability to treat theories as standing independently from the domains in which they were derived, thereby taking them as universal objective propositions governing any individual's relationship to society and culture. Certainly, Foucault and Bourdieu and the gang do theorize on the grand scale. They make statements about "culture" as such. Because meanings pre-exist context according to the cognitivist model, the presence of a word, whether "marriage" in their data or "culture" in Academe, indexes the same referent. As a shared academic culture, we all can be assumed to be using the same

word "culture" to mean the same thing (like much structural scholarship, they track schemas according to the appearance of particular words in the data). Within each critique, they follow a three-step procedure. First, state the theory, which they assume can be done with a few characteristic statements. Context is not a problem, because all theorists who say they've explained something about "culture" as such can be taken to either be right or wrong in any recontextualization of any accurate summary statement taken from their work. Second, under the assumption that the theory purports to be an objective representation, find an instance (usually an ethnographic example) that contradicts and thereby falsifies it. Third, pose the cognitive model as a corrective, a negative of the negative.

The vast majority of their refutations, however, are carried out against positions that are frequently not on the page. From within a positivist framework, theoretical position X, taken as a proposition, necessarily implies, first, that X is a universal generalization; and, second, that all not-X positions are false, even if the theory under scrutiny never actually comes out with this implication. These implicatures are what they refute. Regarding Foucault, for example, they react to the assertion that discourses create experiences of the self: "Implicit in this is that discourses do not represent realities: they create them" (p. 27); hence Foucaultians "do not see a person as something separate that is acted upon by social discourses" (p. 29). The book contains far more answers than questions, straw dogs notwithstanding. The model is pre-imminent in the text and pre-scriptive of anthropological practice by virtue of its obeying a standard of correctness rather than utility.

Geertz's rhetoric gives them fits, as we would expect, because of his tendency to offer functional definitions of self, meaning, culture, interpretation, etc., that are nominally calibrated for the world of phenomena the anthropologist can observe without resorting to causal inferences.⁶⁵ They

⁶⁵ Certainly, many valid critiques of Geertz exist, but to read Geertz as denying the salience of individuals in the production of culture is not one of them. Few cultural anthropologists since have been as concerned with the idea of mind. On the other hand, I agree with the observation Strauss and Quinn make as to the way anthropology's post-1960s

mistakenly believe they are standing with Geertz in opposition to Wittgenstein when they conclude that, because Geertz acknowledges that action transpires in terms of meaningful precedents, it follows necessarily that "meaning is something added to bare actions; it is not simply use" (p. 18). Whereupon they chide Geertz for not remaining consistent with what they take to be this point of agreement. Reacting to several classic Geertzian formulations, they can be heard to grow ever more frustrated with his obdurate refusal to face the to-them obvious fact that meanings have to have a material existence apart from the transaction of meaning (the following quotes proceed from pp. 18-20). "If meanings influence action, they have to be someplace," they reason: "Where are they?" And, "if meanings do not literally rest in symbols and are not identical with symbolic actions, where are they?" And, "if they are nowhere in particular, how can they ever come to motivate action?" They offer an avowedly sarcastic reply from a colleague: maybe the meaning is "in a cloud hovering over Cincinnati." "If culture (a pattern of meaning) is 'unphysical,' how can it have the same ontological status as a rock or a mock sheep raid?" Coming to a landing, they state the warrant of their argument by asserting that Meanings "have to be concrete if they make a difference in the world." They somehow read Geertz as having denied the participation of the brain in symbolic interaction, although a conventional reading has Geertz more conservatively stipulating that cultural anthropology can only practically attend to the observable products of meaning in interaction—an "outdoor psychology," and in fact a field that reclaims the study of mind from the institution of psychology, the fallacious objectivism of which was already being attacked by Marx and Husserl long before.

As Strauss and Quinn note, much of cognitive anthropology's foundation echoes Bourdieu's articulation of habitus and (not just for that reason) harmonizes with many other independently-derived streams of

"psychophobia" latched onto Geertz's zealous attack on cognitive structuralism, with the result that a wink from Geertz made all the natives lose their minds.

thought about habitual action; Although in their case studies I would prefer to divide what Strauss and Quinn call "meaning" into two regions of (hermeneutically-constituted) meaning and (schematically-reproductive) behavior, where the latter is entrenched while the former is continually refashioned contextually within communicative practices, including introspection. But the cognitivist imperative is to look for sufficient cause within a psychic structure, not within an abstraction whose only reality is interactional. Cognitivists really, really want to know if a particular eyelid was winking or blinking, as well as why; not just what the world of potential local interpretations might plausibly be. "To understand why someone acts the way they do it is not enough to know the discourses, objects, and events to which they have been exposed," writes Strauss (1992: 8), again in frustration with Geertz's wink; "we need to know the psychic structures that assimilate those things and render them a basis for meaningful action."

I hate to sound like a broken record, but "not enough" for what? A significant difference stands between Strauss' "what makes them do that?" and the ethnographic "what is going on here," in which it is indeed enough to know what is circulating publicly—not only because that's what is taken to be methodologically available, but also because the ultimate object of interest is often the aggregate patterned dynamics of the Ethnos, regardless of individual rationales, motivations, etc.

I've identified the ideological force of referential language in their argumentation and in the basic goals of their knowledge production. Their methodology remains consistent with this positivist epistemology, which in a sense is laudable. The primary methodological shortcoming is that poetics becomes an anomaly requiring subsequent ad-hock appendages to the model. One might suppose that a psychologistic model would be capable of apprehending individualistic acts of meaning-making that escape circulation in public discourses. But there is no mechanism for recognizing schemas as significant except insofar as they are spoken repeatedly in the analyst's vicinity or otherwise emphasized so that they gain the analyst's attention,

and can thereafter be glossed metapragmatically either by the speaker or the content-analyst. So the world of schema theory is bound within communicative practice and more narrowly within either emic or etic metapragmatics. Furthermore, the discourse that comprises the data originates roughly within a discourse the informant shares with the analyst, because Strauss and Quinn base their research on a content-analytic approach to interview-like elicitations of monologue instead of on speech collected in “natural” contexts. The content analyst then identifies psychological structures on the basis of perceived regularities within the data. The schemas are guaranteed to appear on the surface of communicative practice, insofar as humans learn about our own capacities and possible dispositions from watching and participating with others—this is basic socialization, in and beyond language. There’s no room in the model for meaningful discourse that doesn’t index schemas, and it is unclear what the status of something like glossalalia or schizophrenic discourse would be. Because all thought is based on schemas, however, individuals can fail to find the right words to represent what they mean—Quinn uses such struggles to prove the existence of underlying schemas. The model does not deal with the power of public culture to dictate the terms in which individuals will attend to or express “internal” phenomena, nor the potential inadequacy of available discourse to express everything the individual cognitively-affectively means: the right words are out there, somewhere. Discourse ultimately serves as a guarantor that the analyst will find evidence of brain structures at work, if one goes into it seeking to corroborate that idea.

We have now come up against the same theoretical limit encountered by the proof procedure noted in Chapter 3: of that which the subject can’t communicate, the content-analyst must remain silent. Only now, we’re not talking about theories of culture, but positive statements about what is in people’s heads. The default assumption is that the limits of discourse, as a socially adapted way of speaking, are adequate to the needs of the people who are socialized to those communicative practices. Because cognitivism

also makes a hard-science claim to identify the psychological structures comprising neural pathways, the analyst is likely to have great confidence that nothing else exists, even though the model already guaranteed from the start that nothing else could.

"Discourses about desire (emotions, thoughts, the body, etc.) are not the same as desire (emotions, thoughts, the body, etc.). Anyone who has not read too much postmodern philosophy recognizes this from their own experience" (p. 33). The irony in this quip is that, for anyone with too shallow an understanding of postmodern philosophy (and certainly far too many of its proponents have indulged in postmodernism as a recreational drug), it is too easy to write such things while neglecting the ramifications of the fact that both elements of the contrastive pair have just been written on the same surface using very similar symbols. Her sentiment cannot be written or even introspected except by way of a set of audience-directed discourses, which implies that the pre-discursive referent in itself is what we don't seem to have directly before us, technically. Of all things, "desire" is the one that makes this fact felt most immediately. Empirical science presupposes the existence of the objective world, which is a very useful assumption; but not all empiricists claim to have made it all the way to objective reality through their methods. A conservative and serviceable form of empiricism acknowledges that reality is obdurate and resists our claims, and this resistance is itself sometimes a sign that there is indeed an objective reality out there, instrumentally detectable. There is always the other possibility, though, that resistance of the data is a sign that there are still undetected explicable layers of discourse working on us. We'll never know the end of it, a position that prompts the "post-objectivist" orientation to critique in place of investigation when truth rather than utility is at stake. Post-objective critique relies on the idea that reason is "out there" instrumentally; but, in contrast to model-building, reason and a question are all one needs to authorize a critique of anything at all, including a critique of reason.

I'm not concerned with the "right" answer in this clash of faiths. Instead, the questions that interest me are those that always seem to come and go without saying in such disputes: what can you do with it? What's at stake and for whom whenever we apply a model as a model of versus for reality? These pragmatic concerns are agnostic and neutral with respect to truth claims, postmodern or positivist, and needn't ever be the only questions one asks. They constitute the reflexive monitoring function of any knowledge-producing instrumentality, whereas all the additional questions are what will locate the asker on Science's political map. The cognitivist insistence on attacking interpretivism so vehemently seems to indicate some illegible force at work in the institutional context of anthropology, since the practical question of what changes in the world based on whether one examines meaning in interaction or meaning in still life snapshots is unclear from this text. Given that we do have active brains, I doubt anyone would deny that they are busy matching patterns, learning new ones, and sometimes relying on serial processing to solve problems: these things do occupy the mind. The basic cognitive anthropological model has considerable explanatory force. Yet, the insistence that the observer can read minds, and that this reading is in fact a final reading, remains an article of faith in cognitivist accounts, one divorced from their functionality and products. Strauss' and Quinn's book illustrates the functionality of a cognitive model, its assumptions, and the separability of the method from its assumptions, as well as their refusal to acknowledge the status of those assumptions and the consequent irremediable cast of their methodology. What kinds of projects demand a methodology that (a) claims objective knowledge and (b) locates meaning within the individual brain? I write the answer into two neurological examples where perhaps more is immediately at stake than the "right" way to write about people.

READING THE NEUROIMAGE

Blind people are demonstrably more dependent than their sighted counterparts on memory in everyday life, and especially on verbal memory. They also seem often to develop conspicuous mnemonic abilities. Amedi et al (2003) employ neuroimaging to ascertain how the blind do it. The Israeli scientists cite Talmudic scripture as anecdotal evidence of the blind being given the role of a “living database” of tradition. Such anecdotal evidence inspired a perfectly valid scientific study designed in such a way that it could potentially falsify that initial bit of common knowledge. The cognitivist model of the brain’s geographic specialization they brought to their understanding of the ensuing fMRI scans is not tested, however. Their tests first corroborate the observation that the blind have superior verbal memory, then use knowledge of the brain’s plasticity to explain it.⁶⁶ They conclude that blind brains have refunctionalized the otherwise-unemployed primary visual cortex, abbreviated as “V1” and sometimes also known as Brodman Area 17, so that it now provides extra cortical mass to the task of verbal memory.

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) provides something close to a real-time map of brain activity based on evidence of how much blood oxygen different neural regions are consuming. fMRI is not a tool suited for studying the kind of parallel distributed networks noted by Strauss and Quinn; but, unlike content analysis, it yields “direct” access to the structural-functional map of the brain, without slicing up or irradiating the subject (although don’t let them strap you in if you have metal fillings). Interpretations can vary, but what one sees in the blue glow of the output screen is perfectly transposable within the global community of scientists

⁶⁶ We have good evidence that the brain can strengthen or generate new pathways in response to the need to learn new schemas. This learning process is referred to as plasticity and has become a motivating force in the conception of new avenues of research. Situations might range from traumatic brain injury to learning morse code. Understood as a composite of pathways built or dismantled as a learning process, plus locales that can be refunctionalized, the brain can be said to be socially constructed without one’s having to depart from the emerging discourse of cognitive science.

trained to read it—not a topological theory, but a vista surveying the territory of the brain. No mereological problem as to what level of linguistic fragment properly identifies a truly basic schema: displayed is the electrical origin and endpoint of human experience. The technology inspires awe. The cognitivist paradigm mandates the search for ultimate behavioral explanations in anatomical structures, and the structures, plainly visible, serve as the foundation for the discourses in which experiments are conceived, results communicated, and variables identified. FMRI and other neuroimaging technologies imbue the discourse of cognitive science with an immediacy and objectivity so concrete that convoluted, abstract ideas about discursive and social productions of experience are very readily dismissed in its light as either epiphenomenal or arcane.

Vision science takes V1 to be the receptacle for the impulse driven by the optic nerve. FMRI scans show that this region displays a pattern organized according to the retinal image, which in turn has constructed a neural reformatting of the visual field, and so it is treated as part of what makes up vision. Scientists show the eye a square and a square-shaped imprint forms in V1. Scientists show twelve psychosurgically-monitored ferrets The Matrix, and something very much like Keyano Reeves' hand moves across the V1s of twelve goggle-eyed ferrets in a darkened room (Fiser et. al. 2004). Diagram as follows: ferret wearing little helmet with squiggles of wire coming off it, a tiny movie screen at the back of its head labeled V1; giant movie screen in front of the ferret, labeled, say, VH1. A human hand traces an arrow from the giant screen to V1, and then draws a few other arrows pointing forward from V1 to other brain regions that conduct higher-level processing (the dorsal and ventral streams, plus the infero-temporal cortex). Research has also demonstrated that V1 is sometimes activated by just imagining a visual image, too, but this V1 activity is considered a problem that has yet to be understood. Imagination isn't vision, and studies of this phenomenon haven't been common. No activity in V1 other than representation of a seen object has been taken as

part of the same underlying function of V1 (i.e., equally-indelible arrows haven't been drawn pointing to V1 from other brain regions), perhaps because a sighted brain cannot be actively seeing anything while simultaneously visualizing something else and because V1 activity drops when the eyes are closed. It could have been said that vision interferes with imagination in V1, but visuo-centrism has made that formulation unlikely. Even where mental imagery is acknowledged, it is taken to be an assemblage of things seen, displaced in time. Therefore, in conclusion, V1 must remain vacant for the congenitally blind.

Except, it doesn't always. Amedi's is one among several studies showing V1 to be activated during linguistic, tactile, and auditory tasks. Naturally, the contents of V1 are not retinally organized in the congenitally blind—the patterns analogous to the shapes of presented objects don't appear on the scan, but something is going on in response to other stimuli. "These findings give rise to at least two alternatives: (i) that the occipital cortex of the blind has a general-purpose function, activated by all these different tasks and sensory modalities or (ii) that different anatomical regions within the occipital cortex of the blind may acquire new specialized functional characteristics (much like the 'division of labor' in the sighted brain)." Test results lead them to adopt the second possibility to the exclusion of the first. Under the assumption that the brains of the blind in the Amedi study have been reorganized, the distinction between blind brains and sighted brains is inevitable. The blind brains "seem to have an additional memory-related region, located in the occipital cortex. How this reorganization is accomplished is still a mystery." After providing a simplified overview of their evidence and reasoning, I will revisit the discarded alternative in order to wonder if the evidence from blindness might be trying to tell us that not only blind brains but all brains use the occipital cortex in a more general manner than has been supposed.

The scientists are aware that the visual cortex can be activated in sighted brains by auditory or tactile input, and that this "noise" is normally

“inhibited”; but they assess that the results make “less effective inhibition” of this behavior in blind brains an inadequate explanation.⁶⁷ Moreover, the study’s verb-generation and matching tasks utilized abstract words in order to minimize the manifestation of images associated with the words being presented. In six out of ten of the Amedi study’s blind subjects, V1 was not only activated but also evidenced internal specialization. Braille-reading Tasks designed to access long-term memory regions associated with language lit up a different area of the brain in blind subjects than similar tasks with a verbal input (in neurological discourse, parts of the brain are often said to “prefer” a certain kind of input). This neural activity is tied to language, because non-semantic sounds and dots did not sort themselves in this way. At one point, the authors speculate that a particular region might be activated during Braille activities because it has become a “tactile anchor for the development of Braille responses in the retinotopic region of the blind,” either by itself or as an expansion from the parieto-occipital cortex (which does some tactile processing in sighted brains). In sighted brains, tactility is anterior while more abstract objectifications (size, viewpoint, coordination of sense modalities, etc.) are posterior, but this so-called “hierarchy” is “reversed” in blind brains. Finally, when subjects were asked six months later to identify the words that had been part of the original study, V1 activation was significant for most blind subjects and not for sighted. A previous study had shown that sighted subjects, too, who exhibited superior verbal memory likewise enlisted additional cortical mass when they were remembering. These brains were never said to be “refunctionalized,” however.

The null hypothesis for the Amedi study would be that the blind have not reorganized their brains, and are instead visualizing mental images based

⁶⁷ Fiser’s ferrets (Fiser et. al. 2004) would subsequently demonstrate that what had been called “noise” in V1 actually “has a highly coherent spatio-temporal structure” and is present even when the ferrets are in complete dark. V1 seems to be thinking about something else, this activity accounting for up to 80% of neural activity. Scientific discovery often hinges on expectation and where one directs instrumental attention.

on tactile or verbal inputs, even though the image doesn't act like a visual image on the FMRI. The authors of the Amedi study dismiss this idea in a single sentence as "highly unlikely." I began backtracking their bibliography to determine the history of this assumption. An earlier study (Sadato 1996) entertains and immediately dismisses the same thought: "'Visual imagery' is an unlikely explanation of our findings because subjects blinded early in life have little or no 'visual' memory to aid their Braille reading, which was usually learned after the loss of sight." The authors' quotation marks around "visual" are perhaps an acknowledgment that the neurological home ground of vision has only a genealogical relation to the experience of sight—that is, the retinal image is a neural reformatting of light, and from that point onward we are no longer talking about arrangements of light waves (in fact, what we experience as vision is neural, so that we have no idea what light objectively looks like). Like the Amedi study, however, they maintain a total commitment to the assumption that V1 must be fed by a sense modality and not by a "higher-order" analytical-imaginative process, and that an "image" is not the same thing at all as a spatial scene of the sort that are fed by tactile and haptic inputs in the blind. Cohen et al (1997) in turn disrupted various areas of blind brains as they identified both Braille and embossed Roman characters (again working from the assumption that V1 must be fed only from a primary sense modality and therefore the tactile area has seeped into it): "Transient stimulation of the occipital (visual) cortex induced errors in both tasks and distorted the tactile perceptions of blind subjects. In contrast, occipital stimulation had no effect on tactile performance in normal-sighted subjects, whereas similar stimulation is known to disrupt their visual performance." Arno et al (2001) use sensory substitution gear to observe visual cortex stimulation as blind and blindfolded subjects alternately heard meaningless, familiar, and patterned sounds. It lit up in the blind, and so, once again, plasticity allows the authors to conclude that the blind brain has been refunctionalized to accommodate cross-modal primary input. Again and again, the same story emerges. The images on PET and FMRI scans provide

evidence that the blind have unusual senses of hearing and touch. The Amedi study did not need to take reorganization as the point at issue, but could instead move forward to propose an explanation of superior memory performance based on the evidence of refunctionalization.

Sighted scientists predisposed to look elsewhere in the brain for verbal comprehension and to focus on the V1 image that corresponds to the laboratory object assume that any extraneous V1 activity is either noise or else a sign of refunctionalization. At the same time, the idea of a refunctionalized brain could only have arisen after the advent of fMRI, because the outward human being is functional in the same pragmatic terms as the sighted individual. We know that whatever is going on, the functions of speech, remembering, recognition, scene description, and moving through space are all getting done by blind brains. Drawing on the data of the aforementioned studies, one alternate possibility is that blind people might simply have developed conspicuous strategies for imagining abstract words. The Amedi test utilized verbs, for example, which might especially need to be imagined in a context of action, even if the verb is abstract. Nouns and verbs might not even be speakable without an attempt to contextualize them, and we might not always be aware this visualizing activity is taking place. Maybe we attend to it very poorly, or it might have become comparatively less effective from an evolutionary standpoint than other mechanisms for understanding verbs and so remained underdeveloped. The blind would in this case be developing a human capacity under the rubric of plasticity, but not as a refunctionalization. As a more profoundly divergent alternate story, the disparity between blind and sighted brains might be understood as an indication that the visual form itself is inessential to the general function of V1. Entertaining this line of thought challenges some basic presuppositions.

Oliver Sacks (2003) reviews descriptions of mental imagery in a number of memoirs by the blind and finds that some of us rely heavily on visualization and others not at all. Neither does there seem to be any

correlation between outward functionality and whether or not people claim to navigate according to a mental image. One can wonder what happens in V1 among those who claim not to visualize. Vision science would have to expect that it will light up with sound and touch processing, if the subjects have nimble fingers, good verbal memory, etc.; or else not at all. If, on the other hand, they are using this center in the same way as people who claim to visualize, sighted or blind, how would either the subject or the fMRI-gazing scientist ever be able to identify it as mental “visual” imagery? If they’ve never seen, after all, they would have no way to know their brains were busy concocting the analogs of vision, unnoticed because they make no sense and are always there as a disregarded but potentially organized noise. From the scientist’s perspective, this activity doesn’t respond to the retina and so doesn’t key in to what the scientist sees in front of the subject, which would be the only basis on which she would ever declare it a normally functioning V1. Finally, if V1 doesn’t light up, then we know nothing in particular about that blind brain, except the obvious fact that it belongs to someone who can’t see. These are the sorts of interpretive problematics that make cognitive structural-functionalism so seductive.

But what if, finally, V1 is not a little movie screen at all, but a region associated with spatial processing? What if the word “visualization” has gotten in the way? We have to get beyond the idea that a mental “image,” or one depicted in blood-oxygen levels, means what sighted people familiarly experience as sight. We’ve traditionally oriented the brain along the axis of the sense organs: anterior is where the eyes, nose, and mouth are, transversed by the axis of the left and right ear. Impulses travel from the retinas to the visual cortices, then forward as they are processed. In this so-called “feed-forward” model of the brain, scientists conceptually identify the neural pattern in V1 with the familiar experience of sight, and so the retinally-organized pattern in the brain is inscribed, somewhat reductively, with the label “visual cortex.” Let me offer a highly simplistic pedagogy for questioning this. Turn the brain so that the left inferotemporal cortex is in

front of you and V1 will be off to the right. It is still accepting input from the optic nerves, but maybe from this perspective it will be easier to keep vision in perspective and scrutinize V1's troublesome two-way relationship (now flowing left-and-right) with the ventral stream and infero-temporal cortex, which are regions involved with the processing of objects, spatial relations, and the meaningful organization of objects like facial features into what neurologists sometimes call "scenes". V1 becomes more easily conceived functionally as a space-processing center with neurological connections to the optic nerve; as well as to the non-retinotopically organized inferotemporal cortex, to the dorsal stream (associated with processing in variances in the image), and to the prefrontal lobes (associated with calculation of consequences both for object manipulation and social behaviors). V1 can be retinotopically organized, but V1 is encoded in an intermediate format somewhere between patterns of light and an abstract geometry of spatial relationships. If images of objects, space, and scenes can be processed at all by the congenitally blind, of which we have evidence, then suddenly the problem of refunctionalization disappears. It's a spatial cortex.

Certainly, the idea of a blind brain is no more strange than the indisputable fact of a blind eye or a brain adapted to left-handedness, thanks to plasticity. In all three cases, the point at issue is instead what the neuroimage means. Cognitive structuralism treats blindness as a unitary condition of the organism, rather than as, say, a biological resource or capacity significantly shaped by a social career. In other words, draw a line from the word "congenital blindness," through all possible causes and effects of congenital blindness, to the refunctionalized V1. The narrow context of the clinic, along with the research instruments that have evolved within it, are unable to draw on the kind of longitudinal heuristic study from which classic ethnography derives its sense of contingencies. As a consequence, the reorganization of the study's ten blind brains observed in the clinical setting is fused with the quality of congenital blindness and thereafter will tend to be assumed to be normally distributed across the congenitally blind

population. An authoritative fact about the blind has just been born. The circuit that runs between cognitivism, which explains brain behaviors and outward behaviors alike in terms of “mechanisms,” and the neuroimaging mechanisms designed to make behavioral mechanisms visible confirms itself. However, all that is required to re-open this circuit has been a reflexive question that drives the first wedge: what is the relationship between the electrical pattern that lights up the fMRI and the referent of the word “vision”?

By way of analogy, we’re prone to think of a few bits of computer video memory as holding a bright blue letter W or a hard drive as imprinting little “folders” and “files” that in fact are not even stored as contiguous strings of ions in the machine itself. From one kind of laboratory to another, scientists have ingrained metaphors into their/our experience of alien structures, as when computer engineers began to imagine the “brain” of the computer. Specifically, the computer was imagined according to the engineer’s idea of his brain. The next generation of psychologists Then began using the computers in which they’d become enmeshed as a generative metaphor to direct brain research. Computer memory was an analog of human memory, but now memory science falls back on the image of a computer to describe inputs, outputs, various forms of storage, etc., and memory systems are in company with any number of other systems, subsystems, and routines. Can we even begin to comprehend the extent of knowledge and power that circulates within today’s world bound by this feedback loop between gleaming machines and the clinical rooms that house them? But there really is one sense in which we’ve managed to build computers that mirror the mind’s structure: they operate electrically, which is a format we can’t comprehend or interact with except under the auspices of a more familiar layer of symbols, either mathematical or metaphorical. Vision science is thus already emplotted within a certain scope of possible action that hinges on some set of ideas about localized structure, invariant

functions, and information, all in place when the brain pops up on the monitor.

Twelve head constrained ferrets and a blind man wearing headphones are placed in flickering darkness. What mental image is invoked by an auditory substitution for a Keyano Reeves action sequence? Not a retinotopically-organized one. The blind brain doesn't light up at all commensurately with the ferret brains. But though it fails to correspond to what the sighted analyst sees, let's say it pulses rhythmically to the action and some other geometry appears. Let's say the blind man tries to keep up with the action by sound, which requires a mental projection of space. The spatial field of blindness with which his V1 is all abuzz comprises a working theory of spatial relations and other aspects that reside as variables that might be present but for the moment useless, or question marks that need to be filled in either by manipulating other assumptions or simply waiting and staying attuned. The variables that need to be built into this model are legion, and include things like a theory of what the sighted participants would be able to see, how their dispositions and discourses refract what they see into what they report, what objects would be visually obscured by others, where everything in the field is and was and can be and mustn't ever be, boundaries, locations of objects by sound (including walls), kinesthetics, how far objects extend into space (especially when they are moving around other objects), the space one has moved through, and on and on. Vision is a spatial cheat sheet that largely alleviates the need for any significant command over memory. The blind man is set a task calibrated for a sighted person, but with a sensory deficit, relative to the ferrets. Naturally, a constructed model—a mental image—is a vital tool. It may not and might ought not, for peak efficiency, bear much resemblance to a visual field that could be transposed with a sighted person occupying the same perspective, since the pertinent variables shift in multiple dimensions within time and against it. Imagination of a three-dimensional optical field isn't necessarily

the best representation of space.⁶⁸ Of course, if the blind brain is using V1 to construct a dynamic theoretical model of space, then the hierarchy of abstraction in V1 would be the reverse of the sighted brain, since a lot of abstract processing goes into constructing a (posterior) functional image based on supposition as compared to the more direct (anterior) inputs from language.

In this discussion, I've slipped happily into science-fiction through that aperture in the cognitivist studies concerned with meaningless noise in V1 for the sighted and non-visual but organized activity in V1 for the blind. I've always found sci-fi a good critical tool, so long as the author uses the genre's hyphenation as a dialectical tension. The problem isn't that visual scientists don't know what is going on in the brain: they know—they can see it. But the "visual" cortex already limits the scientific imagination unnecessarily as to what they might be looking at. More fundamentally, one cannot read the display of functional magnetic resonance imaging as a display of functions without first encountering the image already as a map of cognitive structures. The statement "V1 has been refunctionalized" embodies a structural model as the unfalsifiable foundation beneath the functionalist paradigm. Plasticity may well one day force apart these ideas of function and structure, a prospect reminiscent of something similar that happened to anthropology some time back. My big idea about the blind brain is a rhetorically-derived hypothesis, not a neurological one. I know extremely little about neurology or vision science, and I have taken my "facts" entirely from the by-now well superseded article at hand, plus a Wikipedia entry for

⁶⁸ By way of an accessible example, consider the difference between a Web page presented as a two-dimensional layout (left-right, top-bottom) versus a speech presentation that has only one native dimension (earlier-later). Based on several years' professional experience, I've noticed that authors who feel like they have an awareness of accessibility issues will devote much of their energy to translating the visual layout into words—where the left-hand navigation pane is, what is blue, where spacer elements are, etc., all of which translates into time-consuming verbiage that increases the user's cognitive load. An efficient auditory interface has to be conceived in terms of equivalent functionality, not an equivalent experience. My schematization of the page, based on a temporal model, yields an experience of the page that is incommensurable to a visual experience, even though I visualize the page constantly, after a fashion, as I navigate it.

"human brain."⁶⁹ The brain exists for me as a lattice work of discourses, and I have simply employed rhetorical analysis to identify the warrants that establish the parameters for producing knowledge about blind brains. The point is that the reading of fMRI scans can and at times ought to be read as a text about the readers, as much as they are about the brains they examine.

The kind of "thinking outside the box" that occasionally yields a paradigm shift only seems mysterious from the standpoint of being trapped inside the box. One can always improvise, infer, negate, bracket, deconstruct—in a word, "play." Thinking outside the box can be a procedural matter, which is vital for scientific practice; but at the same time cannot be seen to participate in or advance science. This fact is responsible for the wide margins by which scientific discoveries tend to trail behind the wider subjunctive field of science-fiction. Of those few whose goal is to predict the future, six out of seven are nuts, of course, and only in hind-sight does the seventh prove to have been prophetic. Most will have provided something good to think, though, and thereby delivered collateral benefits. My purpose has been only to highlight the legible assumptions of cognitivism in a particular historically-situated research article. Still, these hard-science assumptions have troubling consequences. Once there are blind brains, history teaches that the next idea to pop into someone's scientific brain will be a surgical procedure or chemical cure. If these eventualities seem absurd, it is only because we don't know what intervening chain of events will pick this concrete knowledge up and connect it with some other disorder machine. The blind brain and the trans-orbital lobotomy, discussed below, are only two rather queasy representatives of what is at stake in the privatization of meaning.

I come awake, lying in my bed, lying in darkness. As two sides of the same thought, I wonder what time it is and try to remember the moment

⁶⁹ Thanks, however, go to cognitive psychologist Matt Bronstad for reading a draft of this essay and concurring with my identification of the limiting presuppositions of cognitivism and his admission that my alternative hypothesis is plausible. He doesn't yet believe a word of it, of course.

when I had fallen asleep. I fell asleep reading a book on tape. Had I turned out the light? I couldn't remember doing so, and suddenly the room is lit. I hadn't awakened in darkness at all. I reach over and turn off the bedside lamp, then, when the room stays lit, I blink and remind myself to attend to what my eyes are reporting. The room goes dark. I push aside the white sheet and tan bedspread before climbing out of bed. I see better in the dark these days—in fact, I see better with my eyes closed. A pale yellow beam of light from a street light spills past the blinds to bring out the dark shapes of things in the room. This contrast is real vision, I think. The yellowness as such must be a supposition, though. I would never in practice connect these dim visual cues to anything useful. They are inert, disconnected qualia, although they retain a certain small aesthetic appeal. Testing the light, the sound of the night, and the lack of interest Adler shows in what I'm doing, I conclude it's no later than four. There's a brown wooden table I walk up to—never mind that there is no light to make it brown, since the point is that brown is an experience of the object and so it comes to me as I locate the in-fact colorless object, black as any cat at night, toward which I am moving. I never can remember exactly where on the table I put my water glass, and so my hand scans for it, too quickly, knocking it to the floor where it rolls. I put my hand down at the point where I marked the sound of it hitting the carpet and spend another minute searching for it. Adler licks his chops, signaling that a black-and-tan German Shepherd on his blue-green pad is looking back at me. No one has told me it isn't blue-green, at least. The doorway to the bathroom is open (if it isn't, I'll get a bruised nose on the strength of my assumption), and of course I see this clearly, too, as I walk around the table and get my water from the tap without having to touch anything but the knob. This is not a scene described by "moving through blackness, discovering objects." In my immediate experience of the room, everything is already in its place the moment I think of it. These are not matters of calculation or hearing or even conscious acts of memory. They're not reliable, either. Any of the habituated conditions can fail to hold true. A

series of schematic conditions is presented to me visually. Only vision has this quality of immediacy, which is perhaps why I've adapted this format for imagining my embodied context. It presents space to me as a fact, and all the procedures enacted to bring it to me are imperceptible unless and until something goes wrong. I can never quite get my mind around the way a sight-dependent person moves through a dark but utterly familiar room, a room lived in for thirty years, say. The blackness they move through, in which objects are really not there until they can be groped, must be the way they imagine blindness—as a blackness of not seeing. But of course that's already a view from within the perspective of seeing, since one has to see black. A blind spot is what lies just beyond the edge of a sighted person's field of vision: things are there, but confused and uncommunicative. Things come and go, and what goes is a scotoma, fuzzy with the dream-like sense of being "there," just where I know it is, just where I can focus on it if need be, just like language when it isn't being spoken.

HOWARD DULLY'S LOBOTOMY

Walter Freeman's mission in life was to develop a method of psychosurgery that would make radical and presumably ameliorative behavior modification a cheap, five-minute operation that could be done anywhere. His method was the trans-orbital lobotomy (i.e., over the eyes), although he generally called it his "ice pick lobotomy" because his instrument was a modified ice pick. The operation didn't even open the skull; Freeman navigated by intuition, feel, and prior generalized anatomical knowledge. At least since the publication of *One Flew Over the Coo-Coo's Nest*, the lobotomy has represented Medicine's barbaric yesterday, much as twentieth-century medicine views leaching. Did the biomedical sphere become wiser, coincident with the shift from psychosurgery to psychopharmacology? In terms of medical history, the trans-orbital lobotomy was an advancement over the absolute absence of treatment that came before it, and a procedure

subsequently rendered obsolete by Thorazine and other drugs that characterize the (brave) new world of today. "The medical treatments were not effective," Freeman's assistant Robert Lichtenstein has recently said, "and it was an advanced step over what was previously available" (Gajalin 2005). In terms of the history of social control, we can likewise locate the lobotomy as post-asylum (Foucault 1988 [1965]). Lichtenstein also noted, "trying to render some of these people more cooperative was one of the major goals of management. Otherwise they would have to be put in a room with sometimes just a mattress on the floor, and sometimes they would destroy the mattress" (Chui 2005).

These quotes come from newspaper coverage of the first audition of "My Lobotomy," a 22-minute audio documentary representing Howard Dully's attempt to track down and come to grips with the context of the trans-orbital lobotomy performed on him in 1960, when he was twelve.⁷⁰ He reads the medical reports aloud:

Mrs. Dully called up to say that Howard has been unbelievably defiant with a savage look on his face and at times she is almost afraid. He doesn't react either to love or to punishment. He objects to going to bed but then sleeps well. He does a good deal of daydreaming and when asked about it he says, 'I don't know.' He turns the room's lights on when there is broad sunlight outside. He hates to wash...

Freeman's notes record that Dully is of "a rather withdrawn type" who is "rather evasive about talking about things that go on in the home..." Dully continues to read from his medical records.

November 30 (Dully notes that this was his birthday). Mrs. Dully came in for a talk about Howard. Things have gotten much worse and she can barely endure it. I explained to Mrs. Dully, that the family should consider the possibility of changing Howard's personality by means of transorbital lobotomy. Mrs.

⁷⁰ Produced by Sound Portraits, Inc. See www.soundportraits.org/on-air/my_lobotomy. First broadcast November 16, 2005 on "All Things Considered" (www.npr.org).

Dully said it was up to her husband, that I would have to talk with him and make it stick.

December 3. Mr. and Mrs. Dully have apparently decided to have Howard operated on. I suggested them not tell Howard anything about it.

December 17. I performed transorbital lobotomy.

Physician's Service Report. Transorbital lobotomy: a sharp instrument was thrust through the orbital roof, and moved so as to sever brain pathways in the frontal lobes. 200 dollars for surgery.

January 4, 1961. I told Howard what I'd done to him today and he took it without a quiver. He sits quietly, grinning most of the time and offering nothing.

"Twelve years old. And I was supposed to fight all that? No way." My presentation of the transcript above has removed a key element: Dully's interjections as he looks up from what he is reading and provides context for the benefit of the microphone. After the first passage, Dully says that his mother died when he was five and his step mother hated him. "She would do anything to get rid of me." He also muses that she began to be afraid of him when he became so much larger than her (Dully is now 6'7"). Although Thorazine had gone onto the market six years previously, Freeman's small office was conveniently located a few miles from the Dully home.

Dr. Robert Lichtenstein, the assisting physician for Dully's operation in 1960, shook Dully's hand at the "My Lobotomy" audition and said he was glad the procedure had such a "positive outcome" (McGrath 2005). Journalist Glenda Chui constructs a different history: "Dully, now 56, never went back to school, never graduated. At the insistence of his stepmother, he was made a ward of the state, drifting from juvenile hall to halfway houses to Agnews State Hospital. He committed petty crimes, drank too much and lived on disability payments. He no longer felt welcome at his parents' Los Altos home." The same article quotes Dully's own retrospection: "I felt I was not who I was supposed to be anymore. You can't put your finger on it, but something's been taken away. Something's been altered or changed. It's very frustrating." Naturally, the narrative frameworks of Lichtenstein, the journalist, and Dully are all equally speculative and emerge within different

pragmatic circuits. Each in one sense will claim a higher authority over truth on differing grounds, but none automatically have it and we can't count on excavating it.

Thickening this story even further is the photo of the surgery. Walter Freeman customarily took a photo during each operation he performed, each at the moment when the ice picks were in place. The need for an assistant came at this juncture, when Freeman had to take the picture and, statedly, check the position of the instruments. Some observers have been reminded of mementos taken by serial killers. If the photo-taking behavior was not a compulsion on Freeman's part, then the absence of any medical use being made of the pictures poses a puzzle. I imagine his files—3,439 manila folders, and from each spills the photo of someone with ice picks in their eyes. Is that normal, Doctor? Lichtenstein's hand is visible holding the ice picks in Howard Dully's eyes. This photo itself is, in turn, compulsively reproduced everywhere Dully's story is told, appearing alongside a graphic description of the procedure. The term "ice pick" is always used in place of the pleasantly Nietzschean-sounding "orbitoclast," as Freeman named his slightly-revised ice pick. The verbal spectacle of the surgery only reproduces, lingeringly, the nightmare image of a medical science out to get us that can get us where we live. "Surgery Used on the Soul Sick" was the 1936 New York Times essay that introduced pre-frontal lobotomy. Freeman jacks open the windows to the soul in black and white. No more resistance.

The biomedical story here has been that lobotomy is Medieval by today's standards but represented progress over simple incarceration. The media's story is that Freeman was a monster and/or that lobotomy was evil, a sensibility that fits well with the ethical awakening toward human research subjects that led to the National Research Act of 1974. Both stories can be reduced to the photograph, although the shocking image and queasiness have absolutely no bearing on the merits of the procedure. The fact that even observing physicians would turn and wretch after watching Freeman perform, say, eleven lobotomies in a row may point to something about

Freeman's affective presence during the procedure, a layer of data not legible in the photograph; but even Freeman's own motivations have no bearing on the merits of the lobotomy for its day. Yet, I'm attracted to the obvious dichotomy between the reductive stories that fasten on the photograph, versus Dully's choice to talk it through. The narrative re-presents the past, and this vivification brings to light the human factors that subtend our present. "The lobotomy" gives way to local details in a spoken story that dramatically displays the interests at stake in that initial diagnosis (which in any event never put itself forward as the diagnosis of anything in particular). The photograph is about a procedure and a human organism, both given context by a medical discourse that describes the human being through the lens of a bounded functionalism. In the narrative, by contrast, Dully views himself as a history and set of social relationships. That story compels a human engagement. It also tells us about the clinic as such.

The "bad operation" issue is a dead one, but the ideological apparatus of the clinic remains alive and well or unwell. Functionalism methodically fishes for data within a paradigm itself steered by contextual motivations. Only knowing the truth of the data, the paradigm, and the motivations all three shall set you free, even in your own mind. The problem is that neither Lichtenstein's or the media's story is very dangerous or has much at stake, since both are stories about a past and a man that are dead to everyone but Howard Dully. That means the monster is still out there, living within the walls that enclose clinics of every sort. It will all happen again. It is probably happening under our feet, here, in the present moment.

Chapter 7. Argonauts of the Western Tradition

Chicago: the downtown hotel across from Grant Park, where I take Adler to pee, is a juggernaut held up by the swarming bodies of thousands upon thousands of anthropologists. Gaston Bachelard aptly identified a structural principle behind the human tendency to distribute labors of the body and mind up and down a vertical axis, at least in our homes. As adolescents, we climb out onto the roof to aspire, and later we place our studies on the top floor as the best place for lofty thoughts. Bodies and private things are buried in the dark, humid cellar, just below the kitchen, along with the stackable Whirlpool washer and dryer. An analogous principle divides spaces at the conference hotel, but the structure is inverted. In a reflection of the utilitarian structure of an urban multi-use building, Private spaces are on high while public business goes on near or below ground level: beds above and brains below. A circulatory system communicates the flow of people from one to the other, centered on the thick bank of elevators continually jammed with people who can, in most other areas of the hotel, be observed to navigate according to an index of the social and physical proximity of different people (this index is calculated very differently, approaching an inverse, "in the field," where listening replaces speaking as the basic operating mode).

The flow of humanity spit out from the elevator onto any given level surges forward into a myriad arteriole hallways, all lined with chambers that gradually absorb them. They check the number of the door against a schedule held in their hands and choose the door that corresponds to their interests, the one that will advance their knowledge. Within each of these terminal cells, one figure, the speaker, stands with his body concealed behind the chest-high lectern so that his voice can be projected with unnatural force by the P.A. system toward three hundred or thirty or three people in the audience, while four others sit in a row in front, their nether body parts

hidden by the folds of a white skirt draped over the table: five talking heads positioned opposite their audience. The audience cannot talk back until the end, if there is time and if they have time. I've just come from there back into the hallway, occupied by the faint sound of closed-off applause, the swish of so-called "sports coats" (who plays what in these?), the clink of water glasses: no human smells at all, by design.

I direct my dog into a side passage and am engulfed in a milling crowd. I urge him forward. The cold black nose of a German Shepherd has a particular knack for dividing the waters. But amidst the noise and perfume and all-absorbing walls of one corridor after another, we're lost. "Adler." We stop and he cocks his head up at me attentively. "Where is the elevator?" He wheels us around, diving back through the crowd, but it's no use: he returns to the conference room from which we've just come. I locate someone from the hotel staff by the sound of a walkie talkie, and they take me halfway to my next destination before being called away, leaving behind the promise that someone else would come. I sit down, opting to give it a few minutes before setting out again on my own. I begin planning how I will navigate and imagine myself locating the bell of an arriving elevator. Point of trivia: elevator bells were originally intended to allow the disabled time to position themselves in front of the proper door.

I'm not alone. For a full minute, I monitor the sounds of under-breath mutterings of a cigarette smoker, combined with the activities of a man intent on combat with some personal article. What I should do is turn my head slightly in that direction as if to say "I'm present and am aware that this, whatever it is, is going on, and am not ignoring it, but am not demanding an explanation either. I am turning my head slightly, just as would a sighted person to gaze upon this scene, but obviously I am only acknowledging that gazing in such a manner is what I would be doing if I could see, and you can react to that however you like, now that it's established that I am aware and not forcibly ignoring what I obviously know is happening." I would turn my head a few degrees in that direction, then

back. Instead, I continue to stare straight ahead, thinking about the mounting tension embodied in my obvious act of not turning my head, and monitoring the odd sound in case it turns out to be something I would rather not have acknowledged. It probably isn't a threat to me, but long habit keeps me attuned to the fact that it might be.

The rustling stops and he says, "My briefcase broke."

"Oh, no." One still can't say "that sucks" to a stranger over fifty at a professional conference, which poses a limitation to the display of routine empathy. In front of us, the crowd surges in both directions. Most wear name tags. Many diligently scan the names they pass. Under certain conditions, the scanning eyes and face light up with a respectful, "notice me" gaze at the other's face. Or, the scanning eyes slide off the name tag and onto the next one without raising to see the face at all. This seems to go on throughout the circulatory system as one of its primary functions.

The leather of his briefcase rattles again. "Look at that." The end of a leather strap nudges insistently against my hand. It is a broken strap. "It just snapped," he says, with the tone he would use if telling me about a distant relation convicted for dealing drugs.

"Yes." Ten feet away, a man is intent on pumping an older woman's hand and expressing admiration for so-and-so's work. He isn't aware of the repeated slight bow he makes in concert with every other down-up movement of his arm. Somewhere, there is a zone within all this where peers comfortable with their status and position maintain personal networks, reinforce old friendships, and, often in the rooms above or out on the street, refuel their scholarly passions. I've seen some evidence of it.

The rattle of steel against stiff leather goes on for a few more minutes then stops, either because he has jury-rigged the shoulder strap or his body has caught up with his intellectual realization of the break and he's decided to pick up the handle instead. He is gone, taken up by the flow of scanning eyes. My sighted guide arrives a minute later and I am gone, too, back to the gleaming, chiming, democratic elevator.

This elevator is in fact the site of a small social drama, although I think I am alone in theorizing it. About this time, every television screen in the United States is fixed, in compulsive fascination or else its assumption of America's compulsive fascinatedness, on the scene of Michael Jackson (author of *Bad*, not that of *Paths Toward a Clearing* or of *Beerhunter.com*) on trial for pedophilia. Since every room in the hotel and most reasonably-priced eateries have television screens, the experience is like discovering that we are all enclosed in "Biosphere III: Planet Academe," which I tend to experience at the best of times but now one opens any window onto the world outside and the same sad little extra-terrestrial face looks back, waving the same gloved hand. Many anthropologists have, in private or as a ritual of identity, killed our televisions. And so, turning to drink or evening keynote addresses as an alternative drug comes easily. But in this hotel, as it happens, the elevators all have television screens, and all of them are showing Michael Jackson. In one elevator car, however, the screen has been covered by a bumper sticker for Amnesty International.

I don't know who did it, but I can offer an assessment that the act would have been committed by someone at the bottom of the social hierarchy, not someone with an established name and presence. When the doors close behind the eminent Dr. Jeckel, he exercises a special ability to not notice the icon of 1980s popular culture (strike 1) on the television (strike 2) intruding in the field of the academic conference. The television does not belong on his route or in his interactions upon this securely intellectual field of relations, while Michael Jackson does not constitute a proper interlocutor at all, unless and until he becomes the object of study in one of the cellular rooms fed by the circulatory system. It is likewise important not to overtly turn one's back on the monitor, however, because that is likewise an acknowledgement of the television's power to dictate his action. To his credit, he makes this calculation entirely without his own knowledge of it and without respect to whether or not there are others present in the elevator—which, he now notices, there are. He quickly scans

their faces looking for a peer he can address. It is because the senior academic cannot with certainty maintain his preeminence in the act of being forced into a subject-object relation with either the television or Michael Jackson that the television is required to depart entirely from Dr. Jeckel's plane. It will not be noticed, it will not be spoken of, it will not be defaced.

Graduate students inhabit a very different world within the same enclosed space. Quite apart from that, they've also just come from crashing a party on the twelfth floor. She'd grabbed a handful of politically correct, human-rights-oriented, vaguely anti-capitalist bumperstickers at the registration desk. Three people attended her talk, and the trip has cost her close to a month's salary as a teaching assistant. She has no name when she comes to the lower floors. Everyone she knows here is crammed noisily into the elevator with her, except for the graying, important-looking man who seems not to notice any of them, and so Amnesty International plasters over Jackson's wrinkled nose and whiter shade of pale. The bumper sticker, weapon of the weak.

Speaking now as ethnographer, I want to celebrate this act of everyday resistance because it is concrete. It accomplishes exactly what it wants to and without discussion, without displacing the site of resistance to another space of discussions about someone else's resistance. This act is aware and attentive to the structure we have all strained so hard to let swallow us whole. Up and down the elevator goes, pumping intellectuals between the dark grottos above and the charged scholarly mosh pit below, and for a few hours, those who would notice the screens at all were asked to write letters in support of basic human rights instead. But I don't yet know about this episode as the doors open onto the cacophony of scholars who can smell the boundary line of the conference space over which floats the tinny echo of Muzak. It smells of steak and idling taxi cabs and the tingling sensation of the faint detection of "outside." A small man in a double-buttoned uniform shouts "Going up!" The floor quakes and those inside

brace themselves against the walls as a jet of flame ignites below the car, sending it skywards again in a cloud of smoke.

"Yes sir. I've called them in and they're going to meet me at the elevator with the cleaning supplies right now. Yes sir, I understand." The phone clicks into place and the tall man straightens his tailored jacket before taking up a walkie talkie on his way out the door. I raise one eyebrow as he passes. I'm holding an icepack over my other eye. He offers a wry smile. "We've got beer bottles piled all up and down the hallways on the twelfth floor, but the Man says the big emergency is a bumper sticker in the elevator." When he is gone, I check to see if the cut over my eye is still bleeding. Probably so, but it's indeterminate enough for me to stand, thank the solicitous woman behind the desk, and head with Adler out of the security station. As I make my way back to the roar of the lobby, I'm aware of how quiet and efficient this employees-only behind-the-screen area of the hotel is. It is another filigree of passageways, ducts, locked panels, and closets traveling up the hotel's skeletal structure unseen by the anthropologists. Everyone in this space is Black.

Largely inadvertently, I've trained Adler in an unusual way. Ignoring the first rule of dog training, which is to be consistent, I have always told him what I wanted—or, just as often, asked his advice—using whatever words occur to me. I have counted ten different phrases to which he appropriately responds by relieving himself, for example, while he will snap into professional high gear and perform flawlessly when I say "isn't it the other way?" or "do you remember where the barber shop is?" or "I don't think it's up there." Our communication is based entirely on the assessment I've forced him to make regarding my referentially ambiguous intentions within the present context. He knows what I mean based entirely on where we are, and this system works terrifically well for our mutual understanding as long as I remain attentive to what he, as a dog, is likely to be aware of in the present. He always watches me, especially when he utilizes mute passive resistance, going completely still and inaudible when I give those mundane,

doggie-speak, context-independent commands like “come” or “do you want to go for a walk?” I can say anything, so long as the context accurately fixes the meaning he apprehends. But I can’t make him be aware of obstacles in our environment that he isn’t aware of. Adler is an animal, not a robot, and hadn’t noticed the concrete arch that curved overhead as I had exited the hotel and pointed, giving him the standard command to go right. The one shortcoming of his work is that he can’t programmatically remember to look up.

Leaving the hotel for once and all comes with a sigh of relief known only to the lobster who somehow manages to climb out of the boiling pot unnoticed, despite the fact that I am now at the airport, the second-most disabling environment I know. Adler is heeling at my side rather than working, because hanging onto one more arm is easier than training my Caribbean skycap how to reliably verbalize the right kind of navigation directions that would let me go alongside him without passing him by. He keeps saying “excuse me” in a honking, bored and somewhat rude monotone to the oblivious slow-moving travelers, wheeled luggage heeling at their sides. On we go in this manner for a quarter mile. I catch onto the upset voice of a man who is trying to explain that what he needs is an elevator because his wheelchair can’t go up the escalator. The attendants ignore him and hurriedly speak to one another over his head in a sub-Saharan African language. One of them does, at any rate. The other might be speaking something entirely different. The man raises his voice and speaks more slowly, emphatically, but what the attendants do is call two more employees over. Yelling fiercely now, the man, head thrashing, limbs limp as a doll’s, is lifted bodily from the chair and held by three men. As we pass the scene, the remaining lanky teenager, eyes large and frightened, awkwardly hauls the wheelchair onto the escalator, which ascends toward a light visible within a sort of Plexiglas tube, at the top end of which the man’s impotent sob of rage can be heard before we pass into another area of the terminal.

Someplace out there, as potential readers, are a disability studies scholar who remembers being abducted up an escalator, an anthropologist who showed a young blind man a broken briefcase, an anti-mass-media vigilante, and various participants who might recognize themselves. Others won't.

OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

The following passages, begun in January 2006, comprises a self-addressed exploration through which I began to articulate a vocabulary and set of concepts that would then repeat themselves as a trope and a rhetorical structure throughout the previous essays. When I say "I am writing just at the moment when..." this should be taken literally, as the scene of a man confronting an as-yet empty document while the radio is tuned to the news.

I am writing just at the moment when the status of memoir as a genre has come into question within popular media, thanks to the revelation that James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* has been shown to incorporate several demonstrably untrue statements by the author about his life ("A Million Little Lies," Jan. 8, 2006). The problem, apparently, is that it remains a "real" and productive experience, even though the events are imaginary. So, Oprah Winfrey and others have had to ask themselves what is at stake in whether or not memories are knowingly misreported, and if that situation is different from misremembering one's life. Anthropology likewise has its Carlos Castaneda, the "flying nun of anthropology" (van Maanen 1988: 77), whose spiritual journeys, likely into the UCLA library (De Mille 1976), became a series of trickster tales that have been held up by Mexicans I've known as a sort of Bible for their cultural identity—noting, too, that those who take Don Juan as fact instead of allegory remain in the overwhelming majority today, according to a quick surf around the Web. Distinctions between veracity and verisimilitude can be important, depending on why one is digging into the

matter, but an insoluble truth resides in these texts at the point where the reader has an experience that cannot thereafter be unhad.

Henry Miller was, for whatever reason, spurred to assert himself on this point (Miller 1962 [1939]):

If the self were not imperishable, the "I" I write about would have been destroyed long ago. To some, this may seem like an invention. But whatever I imagine to have happened, actually happened, at least to me. History may deny it, since I have played no part in the history of my people, but even if everything I say is wrong, is prejudiced, spiteful, malevolent, even if I am a liar and a poisoner, it is nevertheless the truth, and it will have to be swallowed.

This passage reflects the structure of the novelistic form Miller invented for himself, which was part autobiography, part fiction, and part social critique in a way that insisted on not marking these as discrete discourses. I'll dwell on it, because Miller turns out to have been, to coin a phrase, a poststructuralist before there was a proper structuralism to be post about. The passage places the reader in the position of what Bateson (1972 [Bateson et. Al 1956]: 206ff.) would later call a double bind.

The double-bind relationship has sometimes been illustrated by a box labeled "everything inside this box is true" nested inside a larger box labeled "everything inside this box is false." The inner-most proposition of Miller's text states, (P or not P) implies Q, where Q is nothing less than the truth of his text and P, the status of which doesn't seem to matter, is whether or not he's lying. The outer proposition reads, not P implies not Q; or, "if the self is a construct ("not imperishable"), then I couldn't be reporting on my past life right now as I'm doing." The two propositions are mutually incoherent. Note, however, that he introduces the passage with "if," which is already imagining the negative of its proposition; and, indeed, he implies that (objective) history might (doesn't?) have a record of these events. But he's never been immanent in history—which, I'd say, might actually be the only way one can be imperishable: to be, for example, a self only on the page of a book circulating somewhere within a public. So the memories are true even

if the self is false, from an objective viewpoint? A certain kind of objectivist would dismiss the book at this point (or would, if not for the graphic sex scenes to follow). Now, back to the “whether or not I’m a liar” term: here, too, the thing is already imagining its opposite and accounting for it (“whether or not”).

The nested-box model depicts structure, but the double bind is actually a theory of practice, not a structure. As an anthropologist-become-psychiatrist, Bateson was already frustrated with cognitivist models that place objects or images of objects in the mind rather than in symbolic interaction. The problem was reification, and the answer was what linguists today call performativity, the fact that signs take their meaning from usage and, in their usage, come to have stable meanings that can help create social realities by pointing to what people take to be going on: “This weaving of contexts and of messages which propose context—but which, like all messages whatsoever, have ‘meaning’ only by virtue of context—is the subject matter of the so-called double bind theory” (1972 [1969]: 275-6). He calls the relationship of what I’ve drawn as the inner to outer box “transcontextual.” In context A, we learn to use signs in ways that bring about reliable rewards from our interlocutors; or, following Bateson’s specific case, the schizo-to-be learns to follow the injunctions of his mother in order to avoid punishment. Next, we learn to recognize key characteristics that make up repetitions of such a context, and the sign-behavior becomes a habit. But then one time in Context X, the reward doesn’t come or Mother wallops the schizo-in-training—the sign is true and not true. Now all the contexts have to be subsumed into a broader context, the habit brought back to the surface where it can undergo modification to accommodate the rupture. What would account for both getting walloped and not-walloped in this ostensible repetition of the same context? For every such synthesis, Mother relentlessly wallops the schizo until the only sustainable strategy is a retreat into literalness with no contextualization at all, like a string of morphemes with no idea of semantics. The policeman says “You can’t stand

here" and the loiterer obligingly sits down. This dynamic, once it becomes a technique instead of a syndrome, even if by a narrow margin, enables Miller's inner proposition to assert itself with an undeniable Walt Whitmanesque barbaric yaup. The text is split from objective history, and the "I" has absented itself from history in favor of a plane of intensities recorded on the surface of the page, a schizo in the Deleuzian sense and so not subjugated by any regime such as symbolic logic. The "truth" of his stories "have to be swallowed" just because this surface is what we the readers are forced to traverse.⁷¹

Bully for him, I suppose, but my interest is more narrowly invested in the logical structure, "if it is fiction, it is true," which gathers up Henry Miller, Don Juan, and Opra Winfrey into a surprising bouquet. In a shallow literary sense, marking fiction as somehow experientially real is the end of it, and consequently a cliché (not only that; the correlated reduction of cultures-as-texts to equal and uncritical ontologies turns cultural relativism into moral relativism). In that camp, I also place the view that an ethnographic allegory based on indeterminate sources "evokes" experience in us and so is its own justification. The force of such texts is stored in images and realized in their ability to contract our attention and compel our belief. A text that is simply forceful as a function of rhetorical or institutional power rather than argument either has its way or goes its way: the reader corresponds with it, desires to connect with it, or not. Miller's text and much of poststructural theory outside philosophy, along with ethnographies addressed primarily to the Academy, exert this kind of force.

Rhetoricians, conversely, measure the force of an argument in terms of what consequences hinge on whether a proposition is true, including whether or not its course of action is followed. In an argument, something is

⁷¹ As it happens, Deleuze and Guattari cite another work by Henry Miller in affinity to their celebration of the schizo at the opening of *Anti-Oedipus*, and this citation is reinforced by Foucault in his introduction to the book. Bateson's double-bind becomes central to their formulation of schizophrenia on p. 79, and Bateson's professional development is read imaginatively in schizoanalytic terms on p. 236.

at stake for the reader, and something from the reader is at stake for the author, and it is this fact that has compelled the published text, even if the writer is using the page in a largely private way as a surface to think with. This risk, introduced when the consequences of P are profoundly different from not-P, is the search for either a habit that reliably succeeds cross-contextually or else the tactical contextual awareness (a meta-level awareness) that will allow the self to better navigate the encounter with rupture. The rhetorical force of an ethnography, from the native point of view, is expressed by a consequential change in practice; while its rhetorical force for the reader is realized by a consequential change in the reader's practice. These are pedagogical and pragmatic rather than representational concerns, and locate the sociological study of the circulation and use of texts apart from the unidirectional study of their production. A messy text like Miller's or Castaneda's demands that its impacts should be watched and its histories excavated. The object in this case is not to know if the reports are true in themselves, but what the experience means, which cannot ever be divorced from the question of for whom it matters.⁷² On these terms, we can begin to think about constructing a text able to produce an experience of individual difference despite the limitations of shared communicative practice. As an ethical pursuit, this encounter cannot rely on simply offering a product one chooses to accept or not. Too much is at stake, and the encounter will be conceptually difficult.

My rereading of Bateson ran across his definition of an idea as "a difference that makes a difference" (p. 272), which I had somehow

⁷² Geertz, committed as he was to the maintenance of ethnography as interpretive "science," would likely disagree, as would many ethnographers today. Writing in 1973, he casually refers to "the little stories Oxford philosophers like to make up for themselves," admitting that they "may seem artificial" (1973: 7). We might today instead say "denatured" in contradistinction with natural language collected off the ground somewhere. Even so, the key mechanism by which Geertz moves the concept of thick description from philosophy into social science is merely to use the episode of a sheep raid from his field journal to exemplify precisely the same winking/blinking story Ryle concocted introspectively (Ryle 1971 [1967]). As discussed in Chapter 1, the consequential difference between a scientific project and a deconstructive one cannot be discussed rationally in the absence of an accompanying reflexive critical perspective on the pragmatics of the text in question.

mistakenly come to associate with Derrida. Googling the phrase finds it in use as a definition within information science and emblazoned as a slogan within business, social work, consulting firms, golf, and in general by anyone wanting to proclaim the value of making an impact on society—because, of course, a difference that makes no difference (if P or not-P then Q) is in effect dissociated from the system. The Google result seems to map the world as a sprawling semiotic network of quantum differences, making up the Information Age. These are the residual and perhaps momentary products of differentiation. Bateson was instead writing about the process.

He ultimately provides the example of a porpoise, trained through double bind to anticipate the need to exhibit some kind of strange new trick for the humans because she knew that repeating the expected would be futile. The animal had to synthesize a long, inconsistent series of rewards and punishments doled out for the same behavior until she realized that it was not the trick but the new trick that gained praise. This realization involved getting walloped to the brink of utterly destroying the animal's ability to trust any gesture the trainer made. On the bright side, the transcontextual syndrome puts present particularity at center field as the only means of escape from the nonsensical game. By the experiment's end, the porpoise had the game fully mastered and spontaneously exhibited "eight conspicuous pieces of behavior of which four were entirely new—never before observed in this species of animal" (p. 278). The moral he gives this story is very pointedly about more than how one gets at cross porpoises: "First, that severe pain and maladjustment can be induced by putting a mammal in the wrong regarding its rules for making sense of an important relationship with another mammal. And second, that if this pathology can be warded off or resisted, the total experience may promote creativity" (p. 278).

Bateson's thinking was revolutionary for the manner in which he conceived the psyche as a communicative product, far above and beyond whatever potentials and propensities genetics provide. It was a failed revolution in psychiatry and psychology, however, as we know. When I

asked a psychologist about how Bateson's interpersonal theory of schizophrenia was viewed by psychology, he had no idea who I was talking about until I tried to explain the double bind, at which point a light bulb ignited with a flash: "Oh, you mean the refrigerator mother guy?" A pair of presumptive inferences has apparently positioned Bateson as a laughing stock: if we can point to genetic or physiological origins of schizophrenia, which in turn usually means that we can effectively control it with drugs, then the mother's mixed messages can't be the cause; and (although this is now superfluous) if it's not the mother, then it's not interpersonal. From that point forward, schizophrenia developed very different careers within psychiatry and psychological anthropology.

This schism is constitutive of the larger schism over the nature of the human mind, modeled structurally by cognitivism and hermeneutically by traditions that approach the mind as a function of discourse.⁷³ Potter (1999) depicts these competing (or mutually indisposed) paradigms as historical progressions from Chomsky on the one hand (and we would want to add Jakobson and Levi-Strauss) versus Wittgenstein and Harvey Sacks on the other. Although Potter identifies ethnography as the archetype of the study of practice, I have argued that both grounded theory and Sacks' proof procedure stem from a core "seeing is believing" structural rigidity that can ultimately occupy ethnography at any level between sense data and the theoretical paradigm. Empirical observation can't cope with difference. It has to recognize it as something. The only way out is to jump through the hoop of negativity. The way I know to accomplish this is through a kind of writing steeped in what Wittgenstein called a grammatical fiction, which in a sense comprises an indeterminate and heuristic negation of the world as it represents itself. Potter also notes that the word "cognitivism" is a very

⁷³ The division is not made along disciplinary lines. Psychological anthropologists might be of either persuasion, while the field of psychology is divided between the eight-hundred-pound gorilla of cognitivism and minority traditions, including narrative psychology (Sarbin 1986), discursive psychology (Edwards 1997), and post-Freudian psychoanalysis (Stern 1997).

recent contrivance, as opposed to “cognitive psychology,” which was simply a moniker for finally being able to do psychology the right way; and that this new ‘ism already embodies the dangerous conception of something beyond the cognitive-structural paradigm. However that –ism became suspect, it’s the right track. The remediation of such a deep paradigm continues to be an ideal goal for a radical critique bent on remediating very basic misrecognitions concerning human experience, knowledge, sense, selfhood, and abilities.

One valid story about our brains has been that humans categorize and objectify as two sides of the same cognitive process. Mary Douglas (2002 [1966]) and Edmund Leach (1964) have demonstrated the utility of such a model to a degree we can dismiss only by ignoring the issue altogether. But there’s a dialectical relationship between Adam’s naming of all the animals and the contrary movements of anomalies, of qualities from one category-object to another, and of the rules dishonored in the breach. A different and more inclusive story about the brain is told in Victor Turner’s last neglected essay, “Body, Brain, and Culture” (1987 [1983]). He asked, what if the faculty hard-wired into humans is a biological imperative to play? What if the contrasts we generate, as when an animal tilts its head to gain more visual images, is something we humans can generate imaginatively through ritual, fiction, games, and discourse? And, what if this profoundly non-Cartesian pineal gland underwrites our ability to perceive objects in the first place? Nietzsche and Hegel could both belong to such a species.

The word “standard” does an entertaining flip when its usage transits from jazz to all things that aren’t jazz; from a common repertory form to be appropriated as one’s own through playing it, to an often tacit set of criteria by which to assess someone’s position within the bounds of a radial category. The jazz standard follows an innovative set of operations to play with time, melody, and harmony in a way that transcends the world of the original piece. This kind of play is deeply instructive as to how one can cope with other kinds of inherited standards. Victor Turner always insisted on the

seriousness of play, and he wasn't alone. Geertz (1973: 11-2) saw fit to observe that one can't play violin music without the score, without practice, or without a violin (though MIDI changed this last). For Gadamer, meaning is a product of understanding, and understanding is a linguistic process of interpretation, and interpretation is an extra-methodical exploration of truth that operates through the to-and-fro jog dial of play. For all the above, the object comes to life through one's playing with it, one's playing of it, entering into its life from the point at which it makes its claim upon us. A standard in the unethical, unjazzed sense of the term restricts which claims are valid ones; whereas, in the jazz world, any noise can be valid, even a stream of consciousness (play it once it's a mistake, play it twice, it's jazz).

I remember jazz pianist Marian McPartland once on her radio show "Piano Jazz" recounting the story of being asked to play something at a party. In attendance was Thelonious Monk, so renown for both the notes he played and for the negative spaces where he refrained. In the story, she walks over to the great man (I see him in a suit and pork pie hat...always). "Mr. Monk," she begins, hands clasped in front of her, "I was thinking of playing 'Round Midnight and wanted to know if you had any advice for how I should play it." He doesn't even turn his head to face where she stands by the arm of his chair, but looks at her from the corner of his eye. "Swing it," he says. "Thank you." She backs away, turns, pauses, and then turns toward him again. "Mr. Monk, after I've gotten through swinging it, then what should I do?" One corner of his mouth turns upwards. "Swing it some more."

ONE LAST DISAVOWED CATEGORY, OR, "UP HE WENT AND DOWN HE CAME WITHOUT HIS EYES"⁷⁴

Anyone attending these essays with a tin ear will classify me as a Gallocentric poststructuralist and read (or not read) the text knowing it

⁷⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII.

proceeded from a set of deconstructive assumptions (although this ought to be a contradiction). Significantly, that is precisely the same procedure by which someone would read or discard the text as being “about” disability as a specialized topic that either corresponds to their intellectual interests or fails to.

When, during the first half of the 20th Century, the voices of Wittgenstein and several others among whom Derrida would soon count himself emerged within philosophy to question the fundamental character of philosophical understanding, their aggregate discourse became known within philosophy as the Linguistic Turn (as a methodological marker) and as the “radical critique of objectivism” (marking philosophy’s problematic relationship to science). Critique it remained as Geertz played his part in transposing it to anthropology. By 1973, Geertz was already able to write as if the whole discussion were old hat for anthropology, while that hat would be remarkably no more or less worn, but much more beaten, twenty years later when the same basic talking points were still at issue. By the early 1990s, the dialogue had been replaced by two discourses talking past one another about the method, the text, and the ethnographer caught in the middle. It was never supposed to be a winnable debate, once it departed from the subject of whether philosophy’s proper object was language or objective reality, although writers too often urged it into that trap by framing the discussion as a fight over the nature of something called “ethnography,” science or art. It was initially supposed to be a performance of the dialectic of understanding which, like a conversation, would keep alive the contextual awareness of differing perspectives—anthropology as a multidisciplinary field. That dialectical tension, I believe, has devolved into something unhealthy. Science remains predictably scientific, but the radical critique has morphed.

Some of the most-criticized aspects of poststructural writing are in fact productive and necessary. First, the brevity and simplicity of conventional writing—what makes it conventional—is a common ground of presuppositions that deconstructive writing can’t utilize, and so the text will always demand

concentration. Second, it is also an in-vivo thought process, not a report—not a “write-up”—and so the abstract object of a poststructural text generally requires metaphor for the sake of the writer as much as the reader, or perhaps more so. Third, although the object might be unitary, its elaborations will be irreducibly complex. The inductive strand of a mobile, creative abduction is, to the very last page, in the process of building a figure out of the very scenes in which that figure begins to be discerned. Any glance into a formative ethnographic text will display some evidence of this abductive process. Take away the concreteness of ethnographic reality, however, and the text becomes highly abstract. Fourth, and as a corollary to the preceding, the intertextuality of poststructural theory is seldom a matter of citing authoritative sources. Poststructuralism grasps that the concept of “applied theory” is impossible. For example, to claim that one is applying Bourdieu’s theory of practice by appropriating the idea of habitus without the concepts of reflexive sociology or objectivity is an incoherent reading of Bourdieu, although it might still produce useful knowledge, precisely because one hasn’t “applied” a theory but learned from a fragment of it and learned to synthesize something that has become one’s own, which is what scholars like Bourdieu and Deleuze and all ethnographers have done. Finally, it goes without saying that all sentences that attempt to firmly predicate poststructuralism, as I’ve been doing, are self defeating. A valid deconstructive project seeks to question the foundations of knowledge, including its own.⁷⁵ We have technologies of inscription and information, but there are no technologies of Socratic dialogue, which is technology’s

⁷⁵ This fact made of Derrida something of a performance philosopher, since to write centrally about deconstructive decentering is always to write about how the writing hasn’t yet captured the subject. Some have adopted his style without adopting his object, which is strictly philosophical; while some critics have dismissed deconstruction on the basis of the oblique style without understanding the relationship in Derrida’s work between style and intent. Neither course is valid. Neither is the claim that literary criticism or anthropology has “gotten past” Derrida, since deconstruction is not located in a linear dialectic in which the notion of progress makes any sense. Neither, finally, need we confuse deconstruction with derrida, since to do so, as Scholes (1989: 50-78) demonstrates, discovers many inconsistencies of argument based on the assumption that a unitary Derrida exists; and, surely, such a “literal” reading of Derrida can’t be the only useful one.

dialectical other. To carry out a deconstruction drives a wedge into the smooth surfaces of things like ideologies, institutions, habits, and discourses, none of which present themselves as rational arguments that can be addressed by classical forms of reason or rhetoric.

The literary conventions that emerged among French and Gallo-centric theorists made a point of performing the fact that one can only learn a discourse by inhabiting it (à la Foucault, but also Bakhtin 1986 [1953]). Escape from the linear dialectic of Hegel was often a central concern. Rhetorically, the effect is a discourse closed upon itself that makes no apologies to skeptics. In this regard, many critics have noted that post-scientific discourse has a way of swallowing its subjects so that they either cannot or never wish to resurface to tell outsiders what they've found that's so amazing, except to say it in its own abstruse terms. Notwithstanding the stipulations already mentioned, these critiques are valid. The label Social Constructionism came from the direction of scientism, but it has become a proper designation for a discourse that operates in large part as a system of internally-referential contentions about the world. What should go without saying is that a critique of objectivism is more effective when addressed to a public inhabiting objectivist discourse. One can take up or opt out of an "-ism," whereas a critique makes a claim on us.

From the processual, exploratory, self-addressed character of the text (what Philistines call "navel-gazing," and not all Philistines are wrong), it follows that the text accords with the in-group's standards of aesthetic value rather than its rhetorical effectiveness for addressing the framework of the out-group. Poetic language serves the poststructural aim of interrogating ordinary language relationships and referents, but when those figures are thereafter reproduced and applied by others as an implicit mode of citation, a public is formed. The danger of learning poststructural ideas through socialization to poststructural discourse, thereby joining it as a public, is the strong possibility that the discourse will become, within its readership, an ordinary language instead of a critical one. A poststructural critic cannot

take for granted that he has learned to be a deconstructionist and will therefore apply those tools to every task. Above all, however, the trouble with poststructural theory is that the discourse presents a sheer surface, the author a finished product who is already writing from the far side of revelation. Much poststructural writing thereby violates a first principle of anti-objectivist critique, in that texts about the constructedness of our most closely-held ideas are in themselves presented as the miraculous products of theorists whose works display no traces of their own production.

If one combines “read culture like a text”—which for most students is the only received residue of Geertz’s synthesis of Ricoeur and Ryle—with Barthes’ concept of the text as methodological field, the result is a wonderful hermeneutic circularity, which can be restated as the confrontation between ideas of data as methodically-collected objects versus data as a discursive product of avowedly overdetermined methodical perception; which in turn resolves into any number of philosophical or anthropological approaches that concede that we always begin any inquiry already standing in the interpretive thick of things. Such is the standpoint of what Americans choose to call poststructuralism, which may be an unfortunate label because it can permit the casual student to dismiss structuralism as altogether passé instead of regarding what happened in France during the 1960s as a mature or advanced structuralist train of thought that left a scowling Levi-Strauss standing on the station platform. Because whether culture is a system of discourses, an assemblage of texts, or the Saussurian system of differences; and whether the systematicity itself resides in the brain or in the reading, we are still either dealing with social structure or else with a glob of jelly without any way to plug a verb onto the back of a noun or a means to discern figure from ground. Texts do have structure, both apparently and intentionally. And texts have structure because practice emerges from and reproduces structures. Structures only exist in practice, and have the same ontological status as language (which is the tricky part). The task is to study how

practice generates and circulates structures, which is not a particularly flighty job to take on.

March 2006: After writing much of the above, I fell asleep and had a thoroughly private experience. I am standing in front of a chalk board drawing a line (this is an actual dream, whatever that is worth), and I affix an arrow to the end, knowing that the figure standing next to me—his/her face keeps shifting indefinitely—will not like it. It is time's arrow, or else an illustration of an argument's valence. At the other end of the board, he/she writes "Belongs to phylum Analida" at the top and then "lumbercus terrestrius" at the bottom (never mind why in high school I made a point of memorizing the Latin nomenclature of the earthworm). Next, he/she smudges out the arrow at my end of the board and begins carefully constructing a dotted line downward between the two terms, the dots meticulously close together and marked with such care that drawing this ellipsis promises to take forever.

I remember wondering if it's supposed to represent a parable told by Lewis Carroll (1895), in which Tortoise tricked Achilles into a paper chase where each step took Achilles further from the finish line. The race comprised the set of steps required to prove the Pythagorean theorem. Within a single logical inference, the Tortoise demonstrates, there are an infinite number of points where one can refuse to accept the logical connection itself. One can accept all the relationships within a right triangle, but reaching the Pythagorean theorem requires the intervening step of first imagining and then accepting the idea of the relationship; and, in fact, even if one accepts that idea, one can still refuse to accept the connection between that idea and the conclusion. It is an infinite race, so that each step takes one further from the finish line. My interpretation is that inferences

have the materiality of social facts and are thus always revocable in practice.⁷⁶

"What is missing from this?" he/she asks, indicating the top of the board.

"You're doing Wittgenstein."⁷⁷ The complete sentence is 'These are objects which stand in relation to me as belonging to a category identified on the basis of certain selective qualities as phylum Analida.'" I begin making close-set dots next to the ones already there, beginning at the bottom and moving toward the top.

Now, I suppose that Freud would have found this dream to be a shockingly displaced meditation upon the worm, because dreams come from the irrational Unconscious. Without a foundation text against which to read the dream, on the other hand, it is simply here to be dealt with on the evidence of its organization and dialogicality. Even as I presented it, the text is already steeped in indexical relations to other texts that may or may not have been "on my mind" in the dream. But what prompted me to think about meaning when I awoke began with the question "do I need to know

⁷⁶ I am also struck by a provocative connection between Carroll's use of the Pythagorean Theorem and "The Phaedrus," that most pesky of all Platonic dialogues, in which Socrates purports to demonstrate that a slave boy already knew, but only had to know that he knew, the Pythagorean Theorem. The implication is that all learning is a remembering, not a penetration of something alien into one's mind. On the one hand, the scene isn't much of a dialogue, seeing as how the very young SLAVE is bound to affirm everything Socrates says, making it a scene of control only pretending to be dialogue. On the other hand, perhaps Plato was very much aware of dialogue after all. Argumentation exists because the "internalization" of new knowledge cannot be coerced. The argumentative quest to find common ground and build an agreement works through the communication of a set of experiences and understandings until the one nominally taking the role of student comes to the very conclusion that constituted the point of contention. At that point, the student hears the initial strange idea again as the echo of something already known, making all learning a process of circulation and return (while non-learning is an infinite race). In less rosy light, hegemony and the Stockholm Syndrome can also be seen as signs of this.

⁷⁷ Compare, possibly, the following (Wittgenstein 1958 [1936-1951]: ¶1232): "Let us imagine a rule intimating to me which way I am to obey it; that is, as my eye travels along the line, a voice within me says: *"This way!"*—What is the difference between this process of obeying a kind of inspiration and that of obeying a rule? For they are surely not the same. In the case of inspiration I *await* direction. I shall not be able to teach anyone else my 'technique' of following the line. Unless, indeed, I teach him some way of hearkening, some kind of receptivity. But then, of course, I cannot require him to follow the line in the same way as I do. These are not my experiences of acting from inspiration and according to a rule; they are grammatical notes."

what this means?" I decided I did. The simplest reading of the dream unpacks the deceptively-objective sentence "Lumbercus terrestris belongs to phylum analida" to reveal the umpteen historical contingencies and possible contextualizations that render an object open to recontextualization. The elements that made the dream nag at me, however, have more to do with recalling the dusty classroom with its flickering dim florescent lights, the rubbing out of a trajectory, and the way the two-dimensional writing surface always reflects something thicker.

References

- A Million Little Lies: Exposing James Frey's Fiction Addiction. 2006. *The Smoking Gun*, January 8, 2006.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1986. *Veiled sentiments : honor and poetry in a Bedouin society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1991. Writing Against Culture. In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by R. G. Fox. Santa Fe: School of American Research.
- Agar, Michael H. 1980. *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. New York: Academic Press.
- Amedi, Amir. 2003. Early Visual Cortex Activation Correlates With Superior Verbal Performance in the Blind. *Nature Neuroscience* 6 (7):758-766.
- Arno, Patricia, and et. al. 2001. Occipital Activation by Pattern Recognition in the Early Blind Using Auditory Substitution for Vision. *Neuroimage* 13:632-645.
- Austin, J. L. 1975. *How to do things with words*. 2nd ed, *The William James lectures ; 1955*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. 1984. *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1986. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by M. Holquist and C. Emerson. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bartlett, Frederic C. 1932. *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Basso, Keith H., and Henry A. Selby, eds. 1976. *Meaning in Anthropology*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an ecology of mind: collected essays in anthropology, psychiatry, evolution, and epistemology*. San Francisco,: Chandler Pub. Co.
- Bauman, Richard. 1986. *Story, performance, and event : contextual studies of oral narrative*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Behar, Ruth. 1993. *Translated woman : crossing the border with Esperanza's story*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Behar, Ruth, and Deborah A. Gordon, eds. 1995. *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ben-Ari, Eyal. 1995. On Acknowledgments in Ethnographies. In *Representation in Ethnography*, edited by J. van Maanen. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 1983. *Beyond objectivism and relativism : science, hermeneutics, and praxis*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Biddle, Jennifer LOUREIDE. 2002. Bruises that won't heal: melancholic identification and other ethnographic hauntings. *Mortality* 7 (1):96-110.
- Boazman, Sue. 1999. Inside Aphasia. In *Disability Discourse*, edited by M. Corker and S. French. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

- Bochner, Arthur P., and Carolyn Ellis. 2002. *Ethnographically speaking : autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by R. Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 1986. The Forms of Capital. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson. New York: Greenwood.
- . 1990. *The logic of practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 1990. The Scholastic Point of View. *Cultural Anthropology* 5 (4):380-391.
- . 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Boyd, Michael. 1983. *The Reflexive Novel: Fiction as Critique*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Breckenridge, Carol Appadurai, and Candace A. Vogler. 2001. The Critical Limits of Embodiment: Disability's Criticism. *Public Culture* 13 (3):349-357.
- Briggs, Charles. 1984. Learning how to ask: Native metacommunicative competence and the incompetence of field workers. *Language in Society* 13 (1):1-28.
- Briggs, Charles. 2004. Theorizing modernity conspiratorially: Science, scale, and the political economy of public discourse in explanations of a cholera epidemic. *American Ethnologist* 31 (2):164-187.
- Briggs, Charles L, and Richard Bauman. 1992. Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2 (2):131-172.
- Brown, Michael Fobes. 1996. Resisting Resistance. *American Anthropologist* 98 (4):729-735.
- Bruner, Edward M. 1986. Ethnography as Narrative. In *The Anthropology of Experience*, edited by V. Turner and E. Bruner. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Bruner, Jerome S. 1986. *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2005. *Giving An Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Carroll, Lewis. 1895. What the Tortoise Said to Achilles. *Mind* 4: 278-280.
- Casey, Edward S. 1987. *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Caton, Steve. 1993. The Importance of Reflexive Language in George H. Mead's Theory of Self and Communication. In *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, edited by J. Lucy. New York:

- Cambridge University Press.
- Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chambers, Ross. 1998. *Facing It: AIDS Diaries and the Death of the Author*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Chui, Glenda. 2005. An Abridged Life. *Mercury News*.
- Clifford, James. 1988. *The predicament of culture : twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 1990. Unpacking "Fieldnotes": Notes on (Field)notes. In *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, edited by R. Sanjek. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Cohen, Leonardo G., and et. al. 1997. Functional relevance of cross-modal plasticity in blind humans. *Nature* 381:180-183.
- Coole, Diana H. 2000. *Negativity and politics : Dionysus and dialectics from Kant to poststructuralism*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Crapanzano, Vincent. 1986. Hermes' dilemma: the masking of subversion in ethnographic description. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by J. Clifford and G. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1992. *Hermes' dilemma and Hamlet's desire : on the epistemology of interpretation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 2004. *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Csordas, Thomas J. 1994. *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- . 2002. *Body/Meaning/Healing*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- D'Andrade, Roy G. 1995. *The development of cognitive anthropology*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- De Mille, Richard. 1976. *Castaneda's journey : the power and the allegory*. Santa Barbara, CA.: Capra Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 1994. *Repetition and Difference*. Translated by P. Patton: Columbia University Press. Original edition, 1968.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1977. *Anti-Oedipus : capitalism and schizophrenia*. New York: Viking Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1978. *Writing and difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Deshan, Slomo. 1992. *Blind People: Private and Public Life of Sightless Israelis*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Desjarlais, Robert. 1997. *Shelter Blues: Sanity and Selfhood Among the Homeless*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Douglas, Mary. 2002. *Purity and Danger*. New York: Routledge.
- Edwards, Derek. 1997. *Discourse and Cognition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Edwards, Derek, and Jonathan Potter. 1992. *Discursive Psychology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- Errington, Joseph. 2001. Ideology. In *Key Terms in Language and Culture*, edited by A. Duranti. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Ewing, Katherine. 1990. The illusion of wholeness: culture, self, and the experience of inconsistency. *Ethos* 18 (3): 251-78.
- Fardon, Richard, ed. 1990. *Localizing Strategies: Regional Traditions of Ethnographic Writing*. EDINBURGH: Scottish Academic Press.
- Fernandez, James W. 1986. *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Fine, G. A. 1994. Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22 (3):267-94.
- Firth, Raymond. 1953. The Study of Values by Social Anthropologists: The Marett Lecture, 1953. *Man* 53:146-153.
- Fiser, József, Chiayu Chiu, and Michael Weliky. 2004. Small modulation of ongoing cortical dynamics by sensory input during natural vision. *Nature* 431:573-8.
- Foucault, Michel. 1971. *The order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- . 1988. *Madness and civilization : a history of insanity in the Age of Reason*. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 1990. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 1999. About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self. In *Michel Foucault, Religion and Culture*, edited by J. Carrette. New York: Routledge.
- Freedman, Michael. 1998. On the Occasion of John Gwaltney's Retirement from University of Syracuse. May 4, 1989. *Transforming Anthropology* 7 (2):62-64.
- Friedrich, Paul. 1991. Polytypy. In *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*, edited by J. W. Fernandez. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gadamer, Georg Hans. 1982. *Truth and Method*. Translated by G. Barden and J. Cumming. 2nd Rev. ed. New York: Crossroad. Original edition, 1975.
- Gajilan, A. Chris. 2005. Survivor Recounts Lobotomy at Age 12. *CNN*, November 30, 2005.
- Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- . 2002. *Ethnomethodology's Program: Working Out Durkheim's Aphorism*. Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 1988. *Works and lives : the anthropologist as author*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1988. The Stakes in Anthropology. *American Scholar* 57:17-30.
- Ghosh, Amitav. 1992. *In an antique land*. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal.

- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Grounded Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Goodwin, Charles. 2004. A Competent Speaker Who Can't Speak: The Social Life of Aphasia. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 14 (2):151-70.
- Grier, Michelle. 2007. Kant's Critique of Metaphysics. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. N. Zalta.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2007/entries/kant-metaphysics>
- Gwaltney, John Langston. 1970. *The thrice shy: cultural accommodation to blindness and other disasters in a Mexican community*. New York: Columbia UP.
- . 1980. *Drylongso : a self-portrait of Black America*. 1st ed. New York: Random House.
- Habermas, Jurgen. 1972. Self-Reflection as Science: Freud's Psychoanalytic Critique of Meaning. In *Knowledge and Human Interests*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Hanks, William F. 1992. The Indexical Ground of Deictic Reference. In *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, edited by A. Duranti and C. Goodwin. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1991. A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,. In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Harris, Grace Gredys. 1989. Concepts of individual, self, and person in description and analysis. *American Anthropologist* 91 (3):599 612.
- Harvey, David. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Inc.
- Hebdige, Dick. 1991. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge.
- Hill, Jane H. 1995. The Voices of Don Gabriel: Responsibility and Self in a Modern Mexican Narrative. In *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*, edited by D. Tedlock and B. Manheim. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Hodge, Robert. 1990. Aboriginal truth and white media: Eric Michaels meets the spirit of Aboriginalism. *Continuum* 3 (2).
- Howard, Don A. 2004. Einstein's Philosophy of Science. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. N. Zalta.
- Ihde, Don. 1976. *Listening and voice : a phenomenology of sound*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Iser, Wolfgang. 1993. *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jackson, Michael. 1989. *Paths toward a clearing : radical empiricism and*

- ethnographic inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 1996. Phenomenology, radical empiricism, and anthropological critique. In *Things as They Are*, edited by M. Jackson. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- . 1998. *Minima ethnographica : intersubjectivity and the anthropological project*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jackson, Jean E. 1990. "I Am a Fieldnote": Fieldnotes as a Symbol of Professional Identity. In *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, edited by R. Sanjek. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- . 1995. "Deja Entendu": The Liminal Qualities of Anthropological Fieldnotes. In *Representation in Ethnography*, edited by J. V. Maanen. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Jacobson, David. 1991. *Reading Ethnography*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Johnson, Mark. 1987. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnstone, Henry. 1978. *validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument*. University Park, PA: Dialogue Press.
- . *The Problem of the Self*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Johnstone, Barbara. 2000. The Individual Voice in Language. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29:405-424.
- Kadi, M. The Internet Is four Inches Tall. In *Media Journal: Reading and Writing About Popular Culture*, edited by J. Harris, J. Rosen and G. Calpas. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Kang, Yoonhee. 2006. "Staged" Rituals and "Veiled" Spells: Multiple Language Ideologies and Transformations in Patalangan Verbal Magic. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 16 (1):1-22.
- Keating, Elizabeth, and Gene Mirus. 2003. Examining Interactions Across Language Modalities: Deaf Children and Hearing Peers at School. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 34 (2):115-135.
- Keller, Helen. 1903. *The Story of My Life: with Her Letters (1887-1901) and a Supplementary Account of Her Education, Including Passages from the Reports and Letters of Her Teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan*. New York: Doubleday.
- . 1938. *Helen Keller's Journal, 1936-1937*. London: Michael Joseph.
- Kendrick, Deborah. 2006. Talking over the disabled is an insult to them. *The Columbus Dispatch*, Sunday, July 30.
- Kirmayer, Laurence J. 1994. Pacing the void: Social and cultural dimensions of dissociation. In *Dissociation: Culture, mind, and body*, edited by D. Spiegel. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press.
- Kleege, Georgina. 1999. *Sight unseen*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kohrman, Matthew. 2005. *Bodies of Difference: Experiences of Disability and Institutional Advocacy in the Making of Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kroskrity, Paul V. 2000. Language Ideologies in the Expression and

- Representation of Arizona Tewa Identity. In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, edited by P. V. Kroskrity. Santa Fe: School of American Research.
- Kuppers, Petra. 2003. *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*. New York: Routledge.
- Labov, William. 1972. The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax. In *Language in the Inner City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, William, and David Fanshel. 1977. *Psychotherapeutic Discourse: Psychotherapy as Conversation*. New York: Academic Press.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Larsen, Steen F. 1998. What is it like to remember? On phenomenal qualities of memory. In *Autobiographical memory: Theoretical and applied perspectives*, edited by C. P. Thompson, D. J. Herrmann, D. Bruce, J. D. Read and D. G. Payne. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lavie, Smadar, Kirin Narayan, and Renato Rosaldo, eds. 1993. *Creativity/Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Leach, Edmund. 1964. Animal Categories and Terms of Abuse. *Man* 11 (4):505-516.
- Lederman, Rena. 1990. Pretexts for Ethnography: On Reading Fieldnotes. In *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, edited by R. Sanjek. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lee, Benjamin. 1997. *Talking Heads: Language, Metalanguage, and Semiotics of Subjectivity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lee, Benjamin, and Edward Lipuma. 2002. Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity. *Public Culture* 14 (1):191-213.
- Lett, James William. 1997. *Science, reason, and anthropology : The Principles of Rational Inquiry*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Translated by J. H. Bell, J. R. v. Sturmer and Rodney Needham. Rev. ed. New York: Beacon Press.
- . 1997. *Tristes Tropiques*. New York: Modern Library.
- Linde, Charlotte. 1993. *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Linde, Charlotte, and William Labov. 1975. Spatial Networks as a Site for the Study of Language and Thought. *Language and Communication* 15 (4):924-939.
- Marks, Deborah. 1999. *Disability : controversial debates and psychosocial perspectives*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Marsh, Dave. 1985. *Fortunate Son: Criticism and Journalism by America's Best-Known Rock Writer*. New York: Random House.
- Mascia-Lees, Frances E., Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerina Cohen. 1989. The Postmodernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 15 (1):7-33.

- Massumi, Brian. 1995. The Autonomy of Affect. *Cultural Critique* 31: 83-109.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1985. A Category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self. In *The Category of the person*, edited by M. Carrithers, S. Collins and S. Lukes. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press.
- McDermott, R. P., and Henry Tylbor. 1995. On the Necessity of Collusion in Conversation. In *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*, edited by D. Tedlock and B. Manheim. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- McGrath, Charles. 2005. A Lobotomy That He Says Didn't Touch His Soul. *New York Times*, November 16, 2005.
- McIsaac, Heather, and Eric Eich. 2002. Vantage Point in Episodic Memory. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 9 (1):146-50.
- McRuer, Robert. 2006. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. New York: New York University Press.
- Mead, George Herbert, and Charles W. Morris. 1934. *Mind, self & society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago press.
- Mehta, Ved. 2001. *All For Love, Continents of Exile*. New York: Thunder's Mouth.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Humanities Press.
- . 1968. *The visible and the invisible; followed by working notes*. Translated by Alfonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Michaels, Eric. 1990. A Model of Teleported Texts with Reference to Aboriginal Television. *Continuum* 3 (2).
- . 1997. *Unbecoming*. Durham,?: Duke University Press.
- Miller, Henry. 1962. *Tropic of Capricorn*. New York,: Grove Press.
- Mitchell, W. J. Thomas. 2001. Seeing Disability. *Public Culture* 13 (3):391-397.
- Murphy, Robert Francis. 1987. *The body silent*. New York: H. Holt.
- O'Neill, John. 1972. Can Phenomenology Be Critical? In *Sociology as a Skin Trade: Essays Toward a Reflexive Sociology*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps. 1996. Narrating the Self. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25:19-43.
- Ochs, Elinor, Olga Solomon, and Laura Sterponi. 2005. Limitations and Transformations of Habitus in Child-Directed Communication. 7 (4-5):547-583.
- Okely, Judith, and Helen Callaway, eds. 1992. *Anthropology and Autobiography*. New York: Routledge.
- Oliver, Michael. 1990. *The politics of disablement : a sociological approach*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- . 1996. *Understanding disability : from theory to practice*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- . 1999. Final Accounts and the Parasite People. In *Disability Discourse*, edited by M. Corker and S. French. Philadelphia: Open University

- Press.
- Ottenberg, Simon. 1996. *Seeing with music : the lives of 3 blind African musicians*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Pandolfo, Stefania. 1997. *Impass of the Angels: Scenes from a Moroccan Space of Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Potter, Jonathan. 1999. Post-Cognitive Psychology. *Theory and Psychology* 10 (1):31-37.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1977. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1996. *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ramos, Alcida R. 1987. Reflecting on the Yanomami: Ethnographic Images and the Pursuit of the Exotic. *Cultural Anthropology* 2 (3):284-304.
- Reed, Deborah E., ed. 1997. *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*. New York: Berg.
- Reeve, Donna. 2002. Negotiating Psycho-emotional Dimensions of Disability and their nuance on Identity Constructions. *Disability and Society* 17 (5):493-508.
- Rensink, Ronald A., J. Kevin O'Regan, and James J. Clark. 1997. TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE: The Need for Attention to perceive Changes in Scenes. *Psychological Science* 8 (5):368-373.
- Rensink, Ronald A. 2002. Changes. In *Progress In Brain Research*, edited by J. Hyönä, D. P. Munoz, W. Heide and R. Radach: Elsevier Science B.V.
- . 2002. Change Detection. *Annual Review of Psychology* 53:245-77.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1979. The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text. In *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, edited by P. Rabinow and W. Sullivan. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Robinson, J. A., and J. A. Swanson. 1993. Field and Observer Modes of Remembering. *Memory* 1:169-84.
- Rommetveit, Ragnar. 1998. Intersubjective attunement and linguistically mediated meaning in discourse. In *Intersubjective Communication and Emotion in Early Ontogeny*, edited by S. Braten. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1993. *Culture and Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Rose, Dan. 1993. Ethnography as a Form of Life: The Written Work and the Work of the World. In *Anthropology and Literature*, edited by P. Benson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Roseman, Marina. 1991. *Healing Sounds from the Malaysian Rainforest: Temiar Music and Medicine*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rubin, David C. 1998. Beginnings of a theory of autobiographical remembering. In *Autobiographical memory: Theoretical and applied perspectives*, edited by C. P. Thompson, D. J. Herrmann, D. Bruce, J. D. Read and D. G. Payne. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Ruby, Jay, ed. 1982. *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.
- Ryle, Gilbert. 1949. *The Concept of Mind*. Watford: Mayflower Press.
- . 1971. The Thinking of Thoughts: What Is 'Le Penseur' Doing? In *Collected Papers*. London: Hutchinson and Co.
- Sacks, Harvey. 1992. *Lectures on Conversation*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.
- . 1992. *Lectures on Conversation*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Sacks, Oliver W. 1995. *An anthropologist on Mars : seven paradoxical tales*. New York: Knopf.
- . 2003. The Mind's Eye (Blindness). *The New Yorker*, July 28, 2003, 1-10.
- Sadato, Norihiro, and et. al. 1996. Activation of the primary visual cortex by Braille reading in blind subjects. *Nature Neuroscience* 380:526-28.
- Sandahl, Carrie, and Philip Auslander, eds. 2005. *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Sangren, P. Steven. 1988. Rhetoric and the Authority of Ethnography: "Postmodernism" and the Social Reproduction of Texts. *Current Anthropology* 29 (3):405-435.
- Sarbin, Theodore. 1986. The Narrative As a Root Metaphor for Psychology. In *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, edited by T. Sarbin. New York: Praeger.
- Scholes, Robert. 1989. *Protocols of Reading*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sedgwick, Eve Cosofsky. 2003. *Touching-Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1993. Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function. In *REFLEXIVE LANGUAGE: REPORTED SPEECH AND METAPRAGMATICS*, edited by J. A. Lucy. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press.
- . 2003. Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life. *Language and Communication* 23 (3-4):193-229.
- . 2004. "Cultural" Concepts and the Language-Culture Nexus. *Current Anthropology* 45 (5).
- Silverstein, Michael, and Greg Urban, eds. 1996. *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Spencer, Jonathan. 1989. Ethnography as a Kind of Writing. *Man* 24 (1):145-164.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by G. Nelson and L. Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Spradley, James P. 1979. *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Squires, Susan. 2006. Solving Puzzles. *NAPA Bulletin* 26:191-208.
- Stern, Donnel B. 1997. *Unformulated Experience: From Dissociation to*

- Imagination in Psychoanalysis*. Hillsdale, N.J: The Academic Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. In press. *Ordinary Affects*.
- . 2005. Cultural Poesis: The Generativity of Emergent Things. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Stoller, Paul. 1989. *The taste of ethnographic things : the senses in anthropology, Contemporary ethnography series*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1991. *Partial Connections*. Savage, MD: Roman and Littlefield.
- Strauss, Claudia. 1992. Models and Motives. In *Human Motives and Cultural Models*, edited by R. D'Andrade and C. Strauss. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, Claudia, and Naomi Quinn. 1997. *A cognitive theory of cultural meaning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Julie. 1998. *Paper Tangos*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Taussig, Michael. 1992. *The Nervous System*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1993. *Mimesis and alterity : a particular history of the senses*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1997. *The Magic of the State*. New York: Routledge.
- Tedlock, Dennis. 1983. The Poetics of Verisimilitude. In *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Toulmin, Steven Edelson. 1958. *The Uses of Argument*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Tucker, Robert C., ed. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Turner, Victor. 1987. Body, Brain, and Culture. In *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications.
- Urban, Greg. 2001. *Metaculture : how culture moves through the world*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- van Maanen, John. 1988. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Volosinov, V. N. 1973. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. New York: Seminar Press.
- Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Problem With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 2002. *Publics and counterpublics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Watson, Graham. 1991. Rewriting Culture. In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by R. G. Fox. Santa Fe: School of American Research.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee. 1998. *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Wiener, Margaret. 1999. Pay No Attention to the Man Behind The Curtain: Irreverent Notes on Gender and Ethnography. *Anthropology & Humanism* 24 (2):95-108.

- Wilce, James. 1998. Transforming Laments: Performativity and Rationalization as Linguistic Ideologies. In *Language of Sentiment*, edited by G. P. Palmer and D. J. Occhi. Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Co.
- . 2000. The Poetics of Madness: Shifting Codes and Styles in the Linguistic Construction of Identity in Bangladesh. *Cultural Anthropology* 15 (1):3-34.
- . 2004. Madness, Fear, and Control in Bangladesh: Clashing Bodies of Knowledge/Power. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. ANSCOMBE. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Woolard, Kathryn A., and Bambi B. Schieffelin. 1994. Linguistic Ideology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23:55-82.
- Zola, Irving Kenneth. 1982. *Missing pieces : a chronicle of living with a disability*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Vita

R. Neill Hadder was born in Midland, Texas, November 21, 1970, the son of Joe Edwin Hadder and Teddy Diane Hadder. After graduating from Southwest High School in Ft. Worth, he enrolled in the Honors Program at the University of North Texas in 1989, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Religion Studies with minors in English and Anthropology. He continued there to earn a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in 1995, followed by a Master's in Anthropology from Northern Arizona University granted in 1998. He began doctoral work in 1997 when he accepted a University Fellowship from the Folklore Program at the University of Texas at Austin. There, he taught discussion sections for six semesters and was instructor of record for three additional semesters. In December 2006, he took up a permanent position on the anthropology faculty at Texas State University, San Marcos, at the rank of lecturer.

Permanent Address: 812 W. Martin Luther King Dr., San Marcos, TX 78666

This dissertation was typed by the author.